

Good afternoon Chair Prozanski and fellow members of the Committee. My name is Gabriel Owens and I am here to keep recreational resorts from getting blanket immunity by cutting corners on safety to save a buck. What happened to me was a result of total indifference and running trails on the cheap. And it should have never happened.

On July 31, 2016, I was riding my mountain bike on the Cannonball trail at Mt. Hood Ski Bowl, and got thrown from a poorly built waterbar into a 4x4 post that held a large wooden sign that was illegally installed just feet off of the trail in the crash zone, instead of using break away stakes holding plastic signs, like were used on the rest of the resort. This section of Cannonball is the fastest part on their resort and Ski Bowl had installed a hiking trail crossing in this area. We literally had to look out for people going at the exact point of our highest rate of speed. Cannonball is used during their downhill races, where I used to race Pro Class prior to my injury. I had ridden Cannonball well over 75 times during my career of riding and racing. I had won races and podiumed multiple times on that trail.

Ski Bowl used us riders to perform trail work, not experts. Riders did the majority of the trail work and maintenance, digging waterbars, building jumps, berms and other man-made obstacles which should've been originally designed and built by experts that knew how to keep the resort safe. Ski Bowl knew that section was dangerous and had discussed with me and other riders in the early 2000's on how to change the area, but we wanted no part of it because we weren't experts and didn't want to be responsible for hurting other riders. So, it stayed the same, dangerous area until after I crashed there and they immediately changed the trail crossing within days. The hiking trail has been moved and no longer crosses Cannonball. Ski Bowl tried to save money by using riders to do the trail maintenance, not professional trail builders.

I've spent over 430 days in hospitals since my crash and over 55 times in the operating room. My spine has been operated on 3 times, has 25 bolts and 2 rods that run from my T-7 to pelvis, and pressure ulcers that became infected. My injury is at my T-10. My life is not easy. It never will be. The older I get, the more challenging my life will become.

It took me a year and a half to decide to sue Ski Bowl. Because of their negligence and failure to keep their property safe, a jury of my peers found them guilty. No amount of money will take away my pain, both mentally and physically. I will never walk again. I can never have children. My depression from my spinal cord injury led me to try to take my own life at one point. I severed my right femoral artery with my pocket-knife and nearly bled to death. Oregon City Police arrived in time to place a tourniquet and save my life. And I'm thankful to them for it.

I still ride bikes, I'm learning to whitewater kayak and started archery for the first time, I play basketball, and workout 5 days a week. I'm a natural athlete and have always played sports and no injury will stop me. I'm determined to keep a smile on my face and continue to play forever.

These resorts are trying to save money by being cheap with their waivers they make everybody sign, instead of being professional and making their property safe for their customers, who they charge astronomical prices, pay their employees low wages and cut corners only to grow their bank accounts. I don't want another person to become injured because these resorts find any way they can to save a buck. Thank you for listening. **Please vote no on SB 754.**