



February 24, 2023

Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources
900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: Support for SB 5521 - Relating to financial administration of the State Marine Board

Dear Chair Dembrow, Co-Chair Pham and members of the Joint Ways & Means Subcommittee on Natural Resources:

Since 1996, Willamette Riverkeeper (WR) has proudly served as the eyes, ears, and voice of the Willamette River. We believe that a river with excellent water quality and abundant habitat that is safe for fishing and recreation is a basic public right. Our mission is to protect, restore, and celebrate the Willamette River watershed.

Our mission includes engaging people with the Willamette River. WR hosts numerous events throughout the year, including public engagement programs such as our River Guardians monthly cleanup events, engaging hundreds of volunteers each year to help clean up our river.

For two decades our River Discovery Program has led free canoe and kayak trips up and down the Willamette River. These trips enable participants to spend more time on the Willamette River. Our programs help broaden inclusion by providing the means for participants to connect with the river, experience its beauty, and develop a stewardship ethic.

Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB) has been a critical partner in this mission, particularly in matters of providing safe and equitable waterway recreation access. Specifically, OSMB staff works with river recreation providers and enthusiasts to enhance communications efficacy around reporting and implementation to remove safety hazards in obstructed waterways. OSMB also provides both expertise and funding for important Willamette Water Trail improvements, including on the ground analysis and design recommendations, and stakeholder engagement facilitation.

Through the Waterway Access Grant Program, OSMB has partnered directly with Willamette Riverkeeper in these actions, as well as supporting our “Paddle for All People” program, which

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successfully engaged many participants in underserved Willamette communities in 2022 in the enjoyment of safe, educational river recreation experiences.

OSMB's professional services, funding, and response to minimize safety incidents on Oregon's recreation waterways plays a key role in providing infrastructure and funding support for the benefit of all Oregonians' safety and access to waterway recreation.

As such, Willamette Riverkeeper supports fully funding the budget recommendations in this bill provided by the Oregon State Marine Board within the requested fiscal funding year indicated.

Thank you for your consideration and support,

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