

Submitter: Sue Wolling
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1576

Dear Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and members of the committee:

On behalf of myself and my many friends to whom bicycling, hiking and renewing their spirit on public trails are an essential part of living in Oregon, I strongly support SB 1576-3, which provides "recreational immunity" for local land managers.

Outdoor recreation provides many benefits, as evidenced by my many friends who continue hiking, birdwatching and cycling well into their 70's and 80's. With a crisis of obesity and mental health problems among our youth, providing opportunities for physical activities in the natural world is one of the best investments we can make in Oregon's future. Land managers should be encouraged to increase outdoor recreation opportunities, and ensuring recreational immunity is essential.

Just as injuries can and do happen on public roads, bike paths or playgrounds, it's possible for someone to be injured while using a recreational trail--but that does NOT mean that we should hold public land managers liable, or that the trails should be closed to the public. Our land and its people are much better off when people can experience and connect to the outdoors. Closing trails is a "solution" that's much worse than the problem.

City, county and other local trails are particularly important for those who have less opportunity to travel to national forests or wilderness areas. For people who have limited money, time or ability, have young children or elderly parents with them, or are of a racial/ethnic group that has not historically felt welcome in outdoor settings, a nearby trail may be the only or best option for outdoor recreation. Equity demands that we maintain access for all Oregonians.

Please pass SB 1576-3 with language that clearly restores recreational immunity for public and private landowners and clearly applies to both improved and unimproved trails.

Thank you for your attention, and for your service to Oregon.

Sincerely,
Susan Wolling
108 High Street
Eugene OR 97401