



February 14, 2024

Support for HB 1576-3

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

I was thankful for the opportunity to testify in person at Monday's hearing. As time was cut short, I wanted to submit my full planned testimony for the written record as well.

The Oregon Trails Coalition advisory council includes representatives from more than 30 public agencies, trail user groups, outdoor industry and tourism partners, and volunteer organizations. We represent walkers, hikers, bikers, runners, paddlers, equestrians, adaptive equipment users, skiers, snowmobilers, and motorized trail enthusiasts.

Our coalition members across the state have been profoundly concerned about the chilling effects of the recent erosion of recreational immunity on trail access and development for Oregonians.

Trails are not a special interest issue. 74% of Oregonians report using their local trails, and are healthier, happier, and more connected to their communities because of it. People feel a great sense of ownership over their local trails, whether they're the site of a daily dog walk or volunteer trail stewardship activities. As a mom, trails have provided places for me to relish the joy of watching my kids run, bike, and explore freely away from the deadly threat of fast moving vehicles on our roadways.

The erosion of Oregon's recreational immunity law does not create any more resources to maintain our trails or to address potential hazards in the always-changing outdoors. In fact, it causes public land managers to shift resources, our tax dollars, away from maintaining trails for the public good to instead invest in trying to shield themselves from liability in ways that often have no direct benefit to the public.

The erosion of Oregon's recreational immunity law also makes it extremely difficult to encourage private landowners to provide the trail easements needed to connect gaps in longer distance trails that can truly connect our communities to each other and to the places we want to visit.

The increased liability for improved trails is especially tragic. Trail improvements like bridges, boardwalks, graded slopes and more not only protect fragile habitats but also make it possible for families of multiple generations and wide ranges of abilities to enjoy our beaches, rivers, and natural wonders together.



The -3 amendment to SB 1576 provides a critical emergency fix to keep our trails open and keep planned trail improvement projects on track in the short term.

We are also eager to see a permanent solution.

We are ready and willing to participate in any workgroup aimed at restoring balance to Oregon's recreational immunity statute and providing landowners with the assurance they need to plan for future recreation access for the trails beloved to our communities today, and the trails our communities envision.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stephanie Noll". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Stephanie Noll,
Director, Oregon Trails Coalition