

Submitter: Joshua Soderlund Hough
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1576

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice-Chairs Anderson and Wallan, and members of the committee:

Please pass SB 1576A to restore recreational immunity for public and private landowners and to both improved and unimproved trails to keep our community trails open and keep trail improvement projects on track.

The public trails all over our state have kept me living in Oregon, have been instrumental to me in building a vibrant social community, and make me committed to never leave. For years I've also been an avid volunteer trail-builder with Oregon State University, the C2C Trail Partnership, and Greenbelt Land Trust. I have seen all of these organizations lately scramble to figure out how to manage liability, and I am worried that permanent closures of my beloved trails will result from failing to fix our laws right away.

Recreating in a constantly changing outdoor environments carries inherent risk of injury. Oregon's recreational immunity law has been eroded by recent court cases, and without recreational immunity, landowners fear the real risk of expensive lawsuits and cannot afford to keep their trails and lands open to the public. They are especially concerned about increased liability of making trail improvements like bridges, railings, and boardwalks, even though such construction can both better protect sensitive habitat and make trails to recreation destinations like beaches and rivers more accessible to people of all abilities.

Thanks for your leadership on outdoor recreation and your special attention to this urgent matter.

Sincerely,
Joshua Soderlund Hough
Corvallis