

Submitter: George Hoffman
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Judiciary
Measure: SB1576

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

This letter is in support for SB 1576 A Recreational Immunity Fix. While the letter is short, the importance of SB 1576 to me is great. As Oregon's population grows, and open space is developed, it is more important than ever for us citizens of Oregon to retain access to those areas that are still open for outdoor recreation.

I am describing just one such instance, that is very local and personal. My family's closest access to the trail system in McDonald State Forest is up the hill from us, 1.6 mi away. To get from the road "trailhead" to McDonald Forest meant crossing undeveloped private land on an old logging road. Now that property is being developed and that access is cut off, at least for the duration of the house building phase. The develop plan includes re-establishment of the access path to McDonald Forest, but ultimately that decision depends on the Home Owners Association of that development. If they feel the HOA is legally liable if someone is injured on that access path, it may never be re-established. That would mean we would have to continue forever the much longer drive (=CO2 emissions) we current have to take to McDonald Forest. The developer wants the path re-established, and the many hikers, runners, and bikers want the path re-established, but the HOA needs to be absolved from liability issues for that to happen.

On the opposite side of this equation, we let the grandchildren of our neighbor cut through a steep, muddy, corner of our yard so they can avoid walking 4 blocks on busy streets to and from their house and their grandmother's house. It would be nice for us not to have to worry about liability issues when we let the children do this.

There are many other benefits from SB 1576, particularly those that relate to liability issues on public lands. For our physical and mental health in our increasingly stressful world the citizens of Oregon need access to public recreation lands. The legislature should do everything to make this possible.

George D Hoffman