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Joint Committee on Ways and Means – Natural Resources Subcommittee
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court St. NE
Salem, OR 97301

Subject: Support for HB 5021 – Oregon State Marine Board Budget

Dear Co-Chair Frederick, Co-Chair Levy, and members of the Natural Resources Subcommittee:

On behalf of Willamette Riverkeeper, I am writing to express our strong support for HB 5021, which provides essential funding to the Oregon State Marine Board (OSMB), including an increased spending limitation for the Waterway Access Grant program. This funding is critical to improving equitable, sustainable, and safe access to Oregon’s waterways for both recreational users and conservation efforts.

OSMB plays a vital role in ensuring the safety of all who enjoy Oregon’s waterways, from paddlers to motorized boaters. Their **online waterway hazard tool** provides real-time information on river conditions, allowing users to make informed decisions before heading out on trips.

Additionally, OSMB’s **safety regulations and educational programs** help prevent accidents and increase awareness of safe boating practices for both motorized and non-motorized recreationists. By equipping users with the knowledge to navigate hazards, comply with safety standards, and prepare for their time on the water, OSMB reduces the likelihood of accidents and ensures a safer, more enjoyable experience for all.

Beyond safety, OSMB is a **critical partner in aquatic invasive species prevention**, a key concern for the Willamette River. Willamette Riverkeeper has conducted numerous invasive aquatic species surveys and restoration efforts to monitor and treat infestations in the Willamette system. OSMB’s efforts in preventing the introduction and spread of these species save the state and other agencies significant funding, allowing those resources to be allocated to other critical waterway improvements, including expanded public access.

The **Waterway Access Grant program** is also instrumental in supporting paddling recreation and improving water trail access, both of which

contribute significantly to local economies throughout the Willamette region. Ensuring safe, well-managed, and environmentally responsible access to Oregon's waterways helps bolster outdoor recreation businesses, tourism, and community engagement in river stewardship. Increasing the spending limitation for this program will allow OSMB to meet growing demand and distribute funds more efficiently during Cycle 1 and Cycle 2 funding rounds.

Additionally, we support the inclusion of funding for an additional registration staff member to improve boat title and registration processing. A streamlined system benefits all waterway users and ensures that funds from these registrations continue to support responsible waterway management.

While we understand that the proposed budget also includes fee restructuring for the outfitter and guide program under HB 2558, we recognize that these funds are contingent upon that bill's passage. Regardless of that outcome, we firmly support the Waterway Access Grant program and the administrative funding needed to process registrations.

HB 5021 represents a sound investment in Oregon's waterways, benefiting both recreational users and conservation efforts. We urge the Legislature to approve this budget request to ensure continued support for safe and equitable water access, sustainable recreation, and river health.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your leadership in ensuring Oregon's waterways remain accessible, safe, and well-managed for future generations.

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