

Date:	February 19th, 2025
To:	Chair Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Committee on Judiciary
From:	Association of Oregon Counties Legislative Affairs Manager, Justin Low
Subject:	Support – SB 179

The Association of Oregon Counties (AOC) is a non-partisan member organization that advocates on issues that unite all county governing bodies and have an impact on county functions, governance, budgets, and services. Thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of SB 179.

Counties are proud to be stewards of parks, trails, waterways, and other natural areas that draw visitors from around the country. By supporting SB 179, you help safeguard these treasured public amenities, ensuring that people of all ages and abilities can continue to explore and enjoy Oregon’s pristine environments.

In 2023, the *Fields v. City of Newport* decision created new legal vulnerabilities for public and private property owners who open their lands and facilities to the public for recreational activities, and jeopardized local government’s ability to keep their lands open to all. That’s why AOC appreciated the temporary modifications made during the 2024 legislative session to provide local governments with recreational immunity protections and is also why we are encouraged by SB 179’s aim to make those changes permanent.

By making these safeguards permanent, SB 179 will encourage outdoor recreation and help local governments feel more secure in keeping their public spaces open for residents and visitors alike. In turn, reducing these risks allows local governments to focus resources on delivering quality public services to their residents and visitors.

For these reasons, Oregon’s counties support the passage of SB 179. We appreciate your commitment to sustaining open and accessible recreational spaces and ask you to vote in favor of this legislation.

Best,

Justin Low
Legislative Affairs Manager for Governance and Revenue

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