

I am writing in **strong support of Senate Bill 1563**.

SB 1563 provides a clear, necessary, and overdue mechanism for Oregonians to enforce the civil rights guaranteed to them under **Article I of the Oregon Constitution** when those rights are violated by someone acting under color of law.

Why SB 1563 Is Necessary

Oregon's Constitution guarantees fundamental rights and liberties. However, without a clear statutory cause of action, those rights are too often **theoretical rather than enforceable**. SB 1563 corrects this imbalance by allowing individuals whose rights have been violated to seek meaningful relief through the courts.

The bill appropriately allows for:

- **Economic and noneconomic damages** when harm has occurred;
- **Injunctive or equitable relief** to stop or prevent ongoing violations; and
- **Attorney fee recovery for prevailing plaintiffs**, ensuring that access to justice is not limited only to those with significant financial resources.

Without the ability to recover attorney fees, many valid civil rights claims would never be brought, effectively shielding unconstitutional conduct from accountability.

Balanced and Responsible Approach

Importantly, SB 1563 is **not one-sided**. It includes strong safeguards against abuse by allowing courts to award attorney fees to a prevailing defendant **only if a claim is frivolous, unreasonable, or without foundation**. This ensures that the bill encourages legitimate claims while discouraging misuse of the legal system.

Additionally, the bill:

- Applies established limits under **ORS 30.260–30.300**, ensuring consistency with existing public body liability laws;
- Applies **prospectively only**, respecting fairness and legal certainty.

Strengthening Accountability and Public Trust

When individuals have no realistic path to enforce constitutional protections, public trust in government erodes. SB 1563 reinforces the principle that **constitutional rights must have real remedies** and that no one acting under color of law is above accountability.

This bill does not create new rights — it simply ensures that existing rights can be meaningfully enforced.

Conclusion

SB 1563 strengthens civil liberties, promotes accountability, and reinforces the rule of law in Oregon. It is a thoughtful, balanced, and necessary step to ensure that constitutional protections are not hollow promises, but enforceable guarantees.

I respectfully urge you to **vote YES on SB 1563**.

