



Oregon Outfitters & Guides Association

Serving Oregon Outfitters Since 1963

Feb 3rd 2026

Dear Chair, Prozanski, Vice-Chair Senator Kim Thatcher, and Members of the Committee,

The Oregon Outfitters and Guides Association strongly opposes SB 1517.

SB 1517's "ski area-only fix" not only leaves a huge swath of the Oregon outdoor fitness industry out and on an island, but as far as we can tell, it was written without any input from ski areas — the people the bill is supposed to support.

SB 1517 does not help ski areas, and it makes the situation for outfitters, guides, and gyms even worse. Passing it would be devastating to outfitters and guides, rural economies, and affordable access to the outdoors.

Since 1963, the Oregon Outfitters and Guides Association has served outfitters and guides licensed and operating in Oregon. We advocate for the preservation, growth, and strength of the Oregon guiding and outfitting industry. Our industry provides sustainable jobs, enhances rural economies, and relies on the quality and availability of Oregon's diverse landscapes. We support investment in outdoor recreation and advocate for the protection and conservation of our state's remarkable natural resources.

Unlike every other West Coast state, Oregon is an outlier when it comes to recognizing liability waivers. Oregon is now one of the most difficult places to run an outdoor recreation business — insurance premiums are increasing much faster than inflation, and options to even be insured are dwindling. This is more than a ski area issue; they were the canary in the coal mine — this also affects guided outdoor recreation, outdoor events, gyms, and more.

Outdoor recreation is a huge part of the Oregon economy and one of the reasons many of us live here. The outdoor industry is full of small businesses. If we don't make common-sense changes and get in line with other states, recreation as we know it in Oregon will only be for rich people — people who can afford the prices we will have to charge to deal with lawyers and find insurance.

As we said in a letter to Chair Prozanski in November and another in January, and as the Protect Oregon Recreation alliance has been saying for years, the recreation liability issue affects more than ski areas. It affects guided outdoor recreation, nonprofits, environmental groups, outdoor events, and even gyms and fitness facilities.

Leaving outfitters, guides, and gyms out negatively affects a huge swath of Oregon's small businesses, many of Oregon's rural economies, and makes it harder and more expensive for people to get outside. What ski areas are feeling is just the tip of the iceberg. Oregon is now one of the most difficult places to run an outdoor recreation business — insurance premiums and legal bills are rising at an unsustainable pace, and options to even be insured are dwindling.

SB 1517 would not be a viable or fair solution. It's not good for consumers, it is not good for Oregon's wild areas, and it's not good for small businesses and the people who work for them.

Right now, the largest personal injury law firm in the country has moved in and is putting up billboards, while guides and outfitters are telling anyone who will listen that we are in an unsustainable position. We ask members of the Senate Judiciary Committee to please ask themselves:

- Do we want to support guides, outfitters, nonprofits, and the people working to get Oregonians outside?
- Do we want to support diverse and affordable access to the outdoors?

- Or are we going to be a place where the largest personal injury law corporation in the country says, “Oregon looks good to us,” and where a small, already wealthy number of people make a lot of money?

If we continue down this path — if we continue to stall on a true comprehensive solution — prices for guests will keep rising, wages will not, small family businesses will disappear, and guided recreation in Oregon will become something only the wealthiest people can afford, provided only by large corporations with razor-thin margins and teams of lawyers.

There is a very simple solution to this issue, and it has very broad bipartisan support — and it is the same simple solution that California, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, and Colorado already have. A solution that brings the system back into balance — recognizing there are inherent risks to recreational activities while still giving guests an avenue to bring a case to the courts.

SB 1517 is not that, and passing it would be devastating to outfitters and guides, rural economies, and affordable access to the outdoors.

Respectfully,

Pete Wallstrom
Oregon Outfitters and Guides Association