

Chairman Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Jerad Sorber. I operate a fishing guide business near Astoria Oregon. I chose to become a fishing guide because I am passionate about sharing the biology, history, and cultural impact of fishing in Oregon. My clients purchase hotel rooms, meals, clothing, flights, rental cars, fuel, and more. In our town and many others along Oregon's rivers and coastline, fishing guides like myself draw tens of thousands of tourists to support our local economies. The vast majority of us are solo operators or small family businesses.

In order to operate my business I have to complete specialized training, obtain and maintain licensing from the US Coast Guard, submit to randomized drug testing, purchase insurance, obtain licensing from the Oregon State Marine Board (the cost of which has doubled this last year), and maintain training in first aid and CPR. I am required to maintain compliance with federal and state maritime and fisheries laws and regulations while I am operating. If I operate negligently and someone gets hurt, I face coast guard inquiry and possible federal jail time. For a small business, I operate in one of the most heavily regulated environments outside of healthcare.

Despite all of that oversight, one of my largest annual expenses is insurance. Each time a charter guide has a claim, my insurance goes up, even if that claim was on the other side of the state, in waters I don't operate in, or is against someone I have never met. It doesn't matter how good I am at informing my clients that water can be dangerous. Any injury, regardless of whether I am negligent can result in a large settlement from my insurer. If that settlement offer isn't enough, my family's home could be at risk, even if I acted prudently.

SB 1517 does nothing to remediate this. While it does solve this problem for ski operators, it leaves everyone else who works to share the natural beauty of our state exposed. Passing such a limited bill while neglecting other operators would be short-sighted. While the ski areas may be more singular and visible, the rest of us are a larger group and serve a larger economic role.

I urge you to reject SB1517 or at minimum, incorporate the broader definitions included in SB1593 in order to preserve the whole of Oregon's recreation economy.

Sincerely,

Jerad Sorber
River Wanderer Outdoors