

Submitter: Nick Gibson  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Judiciary  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1517  
Chairman Prozanski, Vice-Chair Thatcher, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

My name is Nick Gibson, and I am the owner and operator of Trans-Cascadia Excursions, a small, family-owned outfitter and guiding business based in rural Oregon. We operate guided mountain bike and backcountry experiences across public lands, working closely with local communities, land managers, and nonprofit partners. Our business depends on access, safety, volunteer participation, and a legal environment that allows small outdoor operators to exist at all.

I am submitting this testimony in opposition to SB 1517.

Like many outfitters, guides, and recreation providers in Oregon, we rely on liability waivers to operate responsibly and affordably. The current legal environment around unenforceable waivers has already affected our business through rising insurance costs, limited coverage options, and increasing uncertainty. This situation is becoming unsustainable for small, rural operators like us.

SB 1517 addresses this issue only for ski areas, while leaving thousands of other waiver-dependent organizations fully exposed. Outfitters, guides, trail organizations, climbing gyms, bike parks, volunteer groups, youth programs, and conservation nonprofits are all impacted by the same liability environment, yet SB 1517 provides no relief or clarity for these groups.

By carving out a single segment of the recreation economy, SB 1517 fails to address the broader insurance and liability crisis affecting Oregon's outdoor sector. It does nothing to balance or stabilize the insurance market, does nothing to improve access or affordability for participants, and does nothing to enhance safety outcomes. Instead, it further entrenches Oregon as an outlier state, as nearly all other western states recognize and enforce liability waivers.

Just as concerning, SB 1517 distracts from and undermines the Legislature's prior support for comprehensive reform through the ORCA 2026 effort. The ORCA legislation was developed to address this issue holistically, recognizing that recreation providers of all sizes and types face the same challenges. SB 1517 moves in the opposite direction.

As a small business operating in rural Oregon, we do not have the resources to

absorb unlimited liability exposure. If this environment continues, many outfitters, nonprofits, and volunteer-based programs will be forced to reduce services or shut down entirely. That outcome would harm local economies, reduce access to outdoor recreation, and negatively impact conservation and stewardship efforts across the state.

I respectfully ask you to oppose SB 1517 and instead support SB 1593 and HB 4701, which take a comprehensive and equitable approach to addressing liability waivers for all recreation providers.

Thank you for your time and for considering the perspective of small, rural outdoor businesses like ours.

Sincerely,  
Nick Gibson  
Owner & Operator  
Trans-Cascadia Excursions  
Oregon