

Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1593

Oregon Recreation Commerce and Affordability (ORCA) Act of 2026

2/6/2026

My name is John Nicholas Kallas, and I am the founder of **Wild Food Adventures**, an Oregon-based outdoor school and outfitting business dedicated to teaching people how to safely identify, harvest, and prepare edible wild plants. My work takes place entirely outdoors—on public lands, in forests, fields, and natural areas—and depends on responsible guiding, clear communication of risk, and informed participant consent. For my customers, these experiences are not just recreational; they are educational, transformative, and deeply tied to Oregon's outdoor heritage.

Like many outdoor businesses in Oregon, Wild Food Adventures is facing increasing pressure from rising insurance premiums, growing legal uncertainty, and the real fear that we may soon be unable to obtain insurance at all. The core issue is Oregon's recreation liability environment: waiver forms that are standard, enforceable, and relied upon across the country are no longer recognized as legally valid here. This uncertainty leaves outdoor guides exposed to unlimited liability, even when participants knowingly and voluntarily engage in inherently risky activities.

The lack of enforceable waivers radically increases operating costs and legal exposure for small businesses like mine. Insurance becomes more expensive, more restrictive, or unavailable altogether. This is not a hypothetical concern—it is already happening, and it will inevitably force responsible, safety-focused businesses to shut down. The longer this continues, the fewer opportunities Oregonians and visitors will have to engage in guided outdoor recreation, education, and stewardship that helps define the Oregon experience.

This problem has been worsening for years, and it is imperative that we act now. Senate Bill 1593 is arriving just in time. The ORCA Act offers a simple, balanced solution by restoring a recreation liability framework that works. Every other Western state already follows this model, as does the federal government—and Oregon itself used to. Passing ORCA would bring Oregon back into alignment with neighboring states, reduce unnecessary legal uncertainty, and allow outdoor businesses to operate responsibly without being driven out by unmanageable risk. This alignment is critical to the survival of Oregon's outdoor recreation economy.

I also strongly support the provision directing the state to conduct an economic study to better quantify Oregon's outdoor recreation industry. This sector is large, sustainable, and deeply woven into our rural and urban economies.

Thank you to the committee for championing Senate Bill 1593 and for recognizing the importance of Oregon's outdoor recreation businesses. I am excited about the possibility of continuing to safely and responsibly get people outside—learning, connecting with the land, and contributing to Oregon's vibrant outdoor economy.