

Submitter: Tim Thornton

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Commerce and General Government

Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1593

RE: SB 1593 SUPPORT

Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Drazan, and members of the committee,
I am writing to you today to urge your strong support for SB1593, the Oregon Recreation Commerce and Affordability Act of 2026 (ORCA).

My name is Tim Thornton and I am the owner of River Drifters based in Maupin and Wasco County . For 48 years, our business has been dedicated to getting people outdoors. Guiding is more than just a job for us; it is a way to share the incredible beauty of our state with locals and visitors alike, fostering a deep appreciation for our natural resources while supporting our local rural economy.

However, despite our passion and commitment to safety, our industry is facing an existential threat. For the past decade, we have watched the situation deteriorate, and we are now at a critical tipping point. The cost of insurance and legal defense has skyrocketed, not because we are negligent, but because Oregon's current liability landscape is broken. We live in constant fear that in the very near future, we will either be priced out of business completely or simply be unable to find a carrier willing to insure an outfitter in Oregon.

The root of this problem is the lack of enforceable liability waivers. Because we cannot rely on standard waivers that are accepted nearly everywhere else, our operational costs have ballooned. This dynamic directly hurts Oregonians: it forces us to raise prices, limiting access and affordability for working families, and it severely restricts our ability to raise wages for our hardworking guides and staff.

This is why SB1593 is so critical.

ORCA is not a radical change; it is a balanced, common-sense solution that is already proven to work. It simply brings Oregon back in line with every other Western state—including Washington, Idaho, and California—as well as the federal government. For too long, Oregon has been an outlier, punishing responsible operators. This bill restores the standard that Oregon used to have, balancing operator responsibility with the inherent risks of outdoor recreation. It is the stability we desperately need to survive.

Additionally, I want to note my support for the state conducting an economic study as part of this effort. Oregon's outdoor industry is a massive, sustainable economic engine, and we need to better quantify its value to protect it properly.

Thank you for championing this bill and recognizing the urgency of the moment. We are excited to keep doing what we love—getting people outside to experience the best of Oregon—but we need your help to stay in business.

Please vote Yes on SB1593.

Sincerely,

Tim Thornton | River Drifters | riverdrifters.net | 800.972.0430

600 Timber Lane | po box 40 | maupin, or. 97037

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