

Submitter: Steve Kruger
On Behalf Of: Over 9000 Trailkeeper volunteers and supporters
Committee: Senate Committee On Commerce and General Government
Measure, Appointment or Topic: SB1593

Dear Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Drazan, and Members of the Senate Commerce and General Government Committee,

Thank you for your work on SB 1593 and for taking up the important issue of recreational liability waivers in Oregon. We appreciate the Committee's attention to creating a more balanced and workable framework that supports safe recreation, volunteerism, and community-based programs across the state.

I am writing in support of SB 1593 with attention to amend SB 1593 to explicitly allow parents and legal guardians to sign waivers on behalf of minors.

For organizations like Trailkeepers of Oregon and many other nonprofit recreation and stewardship providers, youth participation is not peripheral—it is foundational. Our volunteer programs serve families, youth, and young adults, offering hands-on stewardship, outdoor education, leadership development, and meaningful community service. High school kids come to us specifically to fulfill community service hours. These experiences are often a young person's first entry point into civic engagement, conservation careers, and lifelong connection to Oregon's public lands.

Without a clear statutory path for youth waivers, organizations are forced to make difficult decisions around risk tolerance and insurance coverage. The practical result is not increased safety—it is exclusion. Programs may be scaled back or closed to minors entirely, disproportionately impacting families with fewer resources, youth who rely on nonprofit programs for access to the outdoors, and communities already underrepresented in recreation and stewardship.

Volunteers already provide extraordinary public value by maintaining trails, supporting recreation infrastructure, and reducing costs for state and federal agencies. When youth and families volunteer together, that value multiplies—strengthening communities, building future leaders, and fostering shared responsibility for Oregon's outdoors.

We respectfully urge the Committee to pass SB 1593 with an amendment that includes parental or guardian signatures on behalf of minors. Doing so will ensure that Oregon's recreation and stewardship laws support access, equity, and volunteer-powered public benefit—rather than unintentionally narrowing who gets to participate.

Thank you for your consideration and for your leadership on this issue.