



**Written Testimony in Support of [Oregon Recreation Commerce and Affordability Act of 2026, SB1593](#).**

**Date:** February 6, 2025

**To:** Chair Meek and Members, Senate Committee on Commerce and General Government

**Location:** Oregon State Capitol, 900 Court Street NE, Room 453, Salem, OR 97301

Chair Meek and Members of the Committee:

My name is John Merriman, President and General Manager of Mt. Bachelor. As one of Oregon's premier year-round destinations, we facilitate world-class skiing, mountain biking, and rafting (through Sun Country Tours) on shared public lands. We serve as a primary economic engine for Central Oregon, contributing an estimated \$157 million annually to the regional economy and supporting over 1,800 local employees.

Safety is not just a policy at Mt. Bachelor; it is our priority. We fund and maintain sophisticated safety systems, including a professional Ski Patrol and rigorous terrain management protocols. Because our employees and their families work and play on this mountain, our commitment to safety is deeply personal. We prioritize educating our guests to help them enjoy the outdoors within the limits of their skill and current conditions.

Outdoor sports involve inherent risks that cannot be entirely changed or removed without fundamentally altering the activities themselves. Unfortunately, recent Oregon court decisions have weakened the enforceability of liability waivers, creating a legal environment that is increasingly unstable compared to other Western states. This shift has caused insurance premiums to skyrocket and forced many providers to exit the market. While Mt. Bachelor has successfully maintained insurance for lift-served mountain biking, we are now one of the few remaining sites in Oregon able to do so. These rising costs directly threaten our ability to offer affordable recreation to Oregon families.

If professionally managed recreation areas are forced to close due to legal and insurance hurdles, public demand for these sports will not disappear. Instead, recreationists will migrate to unmanaged, unpatrolled areas, including areas with no signage, no professional patrol, and no expert help. This lack of oversight increases the risk to the public and shifts the burden of emergency rescue to already-stretched local first responders.

I strongly support SB 1593 (The Oregon Recreation Commerce and Affordability Act), which seeks to restore reasonable and commonly accepted waiver protections while maintaining accountability for gross negligence. Furthermore, I support Section 2 of HB 4071, which will quantify the true economic impact of our industry, including the significant local spending tied to passholders. Together, these bills will provide the data-driven roadmap needed to protect Oregon's reputation as a premier destination for safe, accessible outdoor recreation.

Sincerely,

**John Merriman**

President and General Manager, Mt. Bachelor