



February 6th, 2026

RE: SB 1593 SUPPORT

Dear Chair Meek, Vice-Chair Drazan, and members of the committee,

My name is Katharine Cato and I am the Director of Travel Ashland. I also serve as Treasurer of Travel Southern Oregon and Oregon Destination Association boards. I appreciate the opportunity to convey my opposition to HB 4134.

Tourism is the front door to Ashland's economy. Travel Ashland serves as the destination marketing organization, driving and amplifying Ashland's tourism industry, stakeholders and partners. Our quality of life, employment and livelihoods depend on a steady visitor volume year-round from the individual leisure traveler to groups, tours and conferences that are drawn to Ashland.

I strongly support the Oregon Recreation Commerce and Affordability Act of 2026 (ORCA) - SB1593. Outdoor recreation is a huge part of the Oregon economy and the reason why many of us live here. And the outdoor industry is full of small businesses.

However, unlike every other West Coast state, Oregon is an outlier when it comes to recognizing liability waivers and Oregon is in desperate need of outdoor recreation liability reform. Oregon is now one of the most difficult places to run an outdoor recreation business - insurance premiums are increasing much faster than inflation and options to even be insured are dwindling. This affects ski areas, guided outdoor recreation, outdoor events, and more.

ORCA is a simple and balanced solution that is already proven to work, and is what every other Western state already does (and Oregon used to do). That it would bring us in line with the states around us and with the federal government.

This issue has been getting worse for 10 years, and we are now at a tipping point. This legislation is coming just in time. Thank you so much for championing this bill.

Katharine Cato
Director, Travel Ashland
katharine@ashlandchamber.com
541-261-2850