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February 27, 2026

Re: Opposition to SB 1517

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice-Chairs Elmer and Pham, and members of the committee,

On behalf of the thousands of members and volunteers of Tualatin Riverkeepers, I write to urge your support of recreation liability reform that aligns Oregon's laws with other western states. This reform will provide us the certainty to continue our work to steward the rivers and public lands in the Tualatin River watershed.

As our number of volunteers and paddle trip participants has increased to more than 5,000 annually, we have come to understand the need for recreational liability protections. Recreation in Oregon is imperiled by Oregon's liability policies, which are the worst amongst all western states and arguably the worst in the nation. The risks and the costs of operating in Oregon have become overwhelming. While the current lack of protections will not lead to our leaving the state, as it has with some commercial providers, it is a significant threat to our work to protect and restore our watershed.

Since the 2025 legislative session ended without reform, our partners - including some of the largest conservation organizations in the state - have come together to support liability waiver reform. To that end, **we have been consistent through this session in our shared support for the policy language in SB 1593A, which is a workable solution that would meet our needs.**

SB 1517A, which passed the Senate with the -7 amendment, will not provide our organizations with the certainty we need. There is no protection for the stewardship activities that are the heart of our work, and the exceptions to what can be included in waivers would put us at even greater risk.

While we continue to ask for the certainties provided in SB 1593A, we would support moving SB 1517A forward with the -A11 or -A15 amendments. The -A11 amendment includes the language we've requested throughout this process, and we would be willing to trade the certainties of SB 1539A for the broad applicability of -A15 if that is

the legislature's preferred route toward a compromise.

On behalf of our members and supporters, I appreciate your work toward a solution that will provide the protections necessary to so many of our partner organizations that work tirelessly to protect our state's precious natural resources.

Best Regards,

Glenn Fee  
Executive Director