



February 19, 2025

House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade
Oregon State Capitol, 900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Chair Nguyen and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Bend Chamber's 1,750 members and 8,500 businesses in Central Oregon, we appreciate the opportunity to provide support for HB 3140. Over the summer the Bend Chamber convened a group of regional business CEOs and developed an agenda of shared priorities. Understanding the impact of the recreation and outdoor industry on our local economy, HB 3140 was among the issues supported by the regional business leaders from a wide variety of sectors including healthcare, financial services, housing development, bioscience, retail, and outdoor recreation.

The recreation industry is a critical sector of our economy in Central Oregon, as the region supports numerous large companies in addition to serving as an incubator for start-ups and local small businesses. The impacts are far reaching, as local recreation enthusiasts and visitors spent more than \$380 million in Bend alone in 2023¹. This spending supported 3,470 full- and part-time jobs making it one of our community's most vibrant industry sectors. However, the current liability climate makes it extremely difficult to ensure businesses operate in this space. Our underlying support for the changes contemplated in the bill are based on two key factors:

Protecting local jobs and revenue

The recreation industry generates significant revenue for the region via direct services such as guided raft and ski tours as well as products and gear. Central Oregon is home to many of the state's recreation product businesses, and they are a large employer and a key part of our business ecosystem.

Making Oregon a business-friendly state

Doing business in Oregon can be difficult, especially for small businesses and start-ups. We have a complex regulatory system, significant tax burden for businesses, and labor shortages in many industries. Our state's recreation liability laws are among the weakest in the country, and yet another barrier for businesses in this sector. We support reasonable reform allowing Oregon to welcome more indoor and outdoor recreation-centered businesses and continue our identity as a haven for recreation enthusiasts.

Supporting policies that create a business-friendly Oregon is a guiding principle for the Bend Chamber during the 2025 session, and the passage of this bill would be a welcome start. We urge a yes vote on the bill and thank you for your consideration.

Regards,

Sara Odendahl
Director of Government Affairs & Strategic Initiatives
Bend Chamber of Commerce

¹ The Economic Impact of Travel in Bend, 2023 <https://industry.visitbend.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/2023-Dean-Runyan.pdf>