

Washington House Committee on Civil Rights and Judiciary  
John L O'Brien Building  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA, 98504

Honorable Members of the Washington House Committee on Civil Rights and Judiciary  
Committee,

The below signed organizations are writing to express opposition to Senate Bill 5098, a measure that, if enacted, would have far-reaching and detrimental consequences for millions of Washingtonians who rely on public lands for recreation, education, and livelihoods. While we understand the intent to enhance safety, this bill's broad restrictions would effectively dismantle cherished outdoor recreational opportunities, youth programs, and outdoor activities on approximately 6.1 million acres of state-managed public lands. We urge you to consider addressing the following concerns:

1. SB 5098 would eliminate recreational access to hunting, trapping, fishing, shooting sports, and other outdoor recreational activities across vast swathes of public land in Washington State. These activities are not only deeply rooted in our state's heritage but also critical to the physical and mental well-being of countless residents. Restricting public access on 6.1 million acres would be devastating to the numerous outdoor enthusiasts, families, and communities that depend on these lands for recreation and connection to nature.
2. Washington families have long enjoyed fishing outings utilizing WDFW owned access ramps and docks where children are likely to be present. Additionally, Washington non-profits partner with WDFW to provide free youth fishing events across the state each year. At these events volunteers utilize knives to assist youth participants as they experience their first fishing outing. Knives are a vital tool in fishing activities that would no longer be allowed in these locations under the current language.
3. SB 5098 may ban certain youth competitive shooting teams by prohibiting firearms-related activities at state facilities. Many of these programs, held at state ranges, teach discipline, responsibility, and safety to young Washingtonians. Shutting down these opportunities would rob our youth of valuable experiences and dismantle competitive teams that foster camaraderie and skill development.
4. Washingtonians love being outdoors during summer months and take full advantage of picnic facilities and barbeques at state parks near playgrounds.

Open-ended language that includes knives as a banned item would limit the tools needed to prepare and eat food at celebrations in local parks.

5. SB 5098 may prohibit live firearms training classes conducted on or in conjunction with state facilities. These courses, often led by certified instructors, are essential for security personnel, and law-abiding citizens seeking to handle firearms safely and exercise their rights responsibly. Eliminating access to these training opportunities would undermine public safety rather than enhance it.
6. The bill's restrictions on knives and machetes in state parks - where children may be present - may place forest workers, trail maintenance crews, and other laborers in violation of the law. These individuals rely on such tools to clear trails, maintain parks, and ensure safe access for the public. Criminalizing their necessary work is an impractical and unintended consequence that SB 5098 fails to address.
7. Many non-profit organizations host fundraisers involving outdoor activities and banquets at fairgrounds. We have received conflicting legal interpretations on the bill's language around activities on fairground facilities at "fair time" and believe this portion of SB 5098 needs clarity to prevent severely hindering the ability to raise critical funds for community causes, wildlife conservation, and habitat and their weakening the fabric of support for Washington's charitable sector.

The sporting groups below urge this Committee to consider amendments that would make exemptions to allow lawful hunting and other recreational activities on state property and parks to continue.

As noted in number 7 above, we request an amendment to exempt events hosted by non-profit organizations be considered so that these organizations may continue valuable fundraising efforts. Without the legal authorization to conduct raffles and auctions containing sporting arms and munitions at these state venues, youth sport shooting, youth hunting, and nonprofit conservation organizations will find it difficult to successfully raise the funds necessary to continue their important programs that benefit the public. Many of our organizations reinvest the money raised to support on-the-ground conservation projects that improve wildlife habitat, wetlands, riparian habitats and so much more. SB 5098's restrictions could limit fundraising and in turn remove the funding for many of these vital conservation projects.

Finally, we request that any new access restrictions be clearly defined through posted signage on location so that hunters, anglers, and workers on various types of lands where children may be present are not confused, potentially leaving outdoor recreationists liable for inadvertently violating these new restrictions while pursuing their otherwise safe and legal activities.

Senate Bill 5098, casts too wide a net, threatening the livelihoods, recreation, and education of countless residents. We respectfully urge the House Judiciary Committee to oppose or modify this legislation to protect the rights and outdoor traditions of Washingtonians. Thank you for your time and consideration. We are happy to discuss these concerns further if needed.

Sincerely,

Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation

Coastal Conservation Association

Delta Waterfowl

Ducks Unlimited

National Wild Turkey Federation

Northeast Washington Wildlife Group

Safari Club International

Sportsmen's Alliance

Washington Cattlemen's Association