



June 22, 2020

Senator Courtney and Representative Kotek,
Joint Interim Committee
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4047 Support, State Transient Lodging Tax

Dear Co-Chair Courtney, Co-Chair Kotek, Co-Vice Chair Girod, Co-Vice Chair Drazan and members of the Joint Interim Committee:

On behalf of Oregon's tourism industry, I am writing to ask for your support of HB 4047 which would lift the sunset on the state transient lodging tax (TLT) and maintain the current level of investment in Oregon's tourism industry.

The TLT was established in 2003 to create a dedicated funding source to promote tourism and economic development in the hospitality industry in Oregon. In 2016 the tax was adjusted to 1.8% with a sunset to 1.5% in July 2020.

As you may know, 30% of the TLT funds are dollars that are leveraged to bolster the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP) and Competitive Grants Programs led by Travel Oregon.

These programs support local communities throughout the state: helping them develop their destination, conceiving new tourism assets, expanding the visitor industry and improving local livability for residents and those who visit.

As a leader in one of the seven Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (RDMOs), I am urging you to lift the sunset and maintain the statewide TLT at 1.8%. The success of the programs administered by Travel Oregon through revenue generated from this tax have been critical to our region's success in growing jobs and increased economic activity for our community.

In Mt. Hood and the Columbia River Gorge, the state program has supported our ability to:

- Build and grow a 120+ volunteer program for our trailheads during the busy season to share key safety and stewardship information which reaches upwards of 23,000 visitors a year.
- Grant \$30,000 annually to local community partners to develop, steward, and support their tourism initiatives and projects

- Focus marketing and development of tourism in our outlying communities to boost their economies and help relieve pressure on our high-use areas like Multnomah Falls and Timberline Lodge
- Provide invaluable training and networking opportunities for our tourism and community leaders around areas like: customer service training, business resiliency training, grant writing, and Google My Business
- Respond to and support regional tourism efforts in the wake of the Eagle Creek Fire and COVID-19 pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the leisure and hospitality sector significantly more than any other sector in our region. Maintaining the TLT funding rate will support our regional efforts in the coming years to support the recovery efforts of reviving this very important sector for our local community's economies.

Without the current state TLT 1.8% rate, these kinds of grant projects and regional funding will be cut and programs that leverage these state dollars will be scaled back.

These investments both supported our region as a destination for visitors inside and outside the state, providing added value to the quality of life for the residents of our community. These investments would not have been possible without the state support through the TLT. I would be happy to share more details on how our community benefits directly from the TLT and answer any questions you may have as you consider this important legislation.

Again, we urge your support of HB 4047 to keep the current statewide lodging tax rate at 1.8%, a decision that will ultimately support continued economic growth and development in every region of Oregon. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

Lizzie Keenan

Lizzie Keenan

Regional Tourism Coordinator

Mt. Hood and the Columbia River Gorge Regional Tourism Alliance

lizzie@hood-gorge.com

503-655-8458

www.hood-gorge.com