



PAT FARR

Lane County Commissioner
North Eugene District
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DATE: February 15, 2019
TO: Senate Committee on Housing
RE: SB 595, relating to local transient lodging taxes

Chair Fagan and Members of the Committee:

I support SB 595, which if passed would provide me with an additional and sharply focused tool to utilize during our annual budget process.

Lane County is experiencing a housing crisis and I have devoted a large portion of my tenure by focusing on finding ways that our organization can contribute to alleviating this situation. I want to thank you for scheduling today's public hearing so that the opportunity provided by SB 595 can be discussed in open. I also want to thank my colleague in Tillamook County, Commissioner Bill Baertlein, for taking the initiative on this issue which is particularly critical in Tillamook County and indeed along Oregon's entire coastal region.

The expenditure of revenues resulting from our local transient lodging tax is always a rich conversation during Lane County's budget deliberations. We receive a quarterly update from Lane County's highly able destination marketing organization, Eugene Cascades & Coast. This multi-faceted organization has focused their energies on promoting the entirety of our region and is a resource for both the tourism services industry and visitors who may be intrigued by spending time (and money) within our region. We recently re-structured our funding agreement with them to provide additional fiscal stability so that they are even better at promoting Lane County as a destination.

However, their work does not typically focus on the critical issue of how to ensure that a workforce exists to serve visitors. And my ability to link revenues from tourism to workforce housing is highly limited. SB 595 would provide a new opportunity in this realm by allowing our Board of Commissioners to consider a carve out of this revenue to be allocated for workforce housing projects mandated under the bill to be targeted for the most challenged Lane County residents, that is those earning below 125 percent of the median county income.

We know how to allocate and utilize this potential resource and we know where our greatest needs lie. I will continue to watch this measure, and hope the Legislature finds a way to get this measure to Governor Brown's desk.