CONSOLIDATED OREGON INDIVISIBLE NETWORK

Dear Chair Nathanson and Members of the House Committee on Revenue,

We are writing on behalf of the Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network (COIN) which comprises over 75 Indivisible groups and thousands of members across Oregon and has its own Climate Energy and Environment (CEE) Team. The CEE Team collaborates with organizations, agencies, and groups across the Pacific Northwest to advocate for laws and programs that promote and protect our natural world. Oregon's famed wildlife and their habitats are important to healthy ecosystems.

We are writing to express our full support for HB 4134. The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has identified over 300 species facing extinction in Oregon. Eleven key habitat areas are at risk. ODFW has a plan to recover these species (https://oregonconservationstrategy.org/), however ODFW does not have the dedicated funding to implement this plan and programs to recover wildlife species and habitat have been severely underfunded. This must change now.

HB 4134 is endorsed by entities across Oregon, including businesses, rural and urban residents, and voters of all parties or no party, because it is common sense and serves the people of Oregon. Just a 1.25% increase on the transient lodging tax would make a significant difference in protecting our wildlife and their habitats. Benefits to wildlife will bring benefits to people, businesses, and communities of Oregon. Realize that this tax will mostly be paid by visitors to this state and none will be paid by businesses. Visitors come to Oregon to experience wildlife, much of which is rapidly disappearing, and many will be proud and grateful to know they are helping to save what they value.

Passage of HB 4134 will result in:

- reduction in wildlife-vehicle collisions,
- improved invasive species control,
- provision of a dedicated funding source to the ODFW so they will no longer need to rely on voluntary donations to wildlife rehabilitation centers
- additional anti-poaching law enforcement (an increasing problem),
- more outdoor education,
- expanded habitat restoration,
- increased beaver habitat (hence, less spread of wildfire),
- added wolf-predation compensation for ranchers

- support for jobs with Oregon Conservation Corps to train a skilled workforce to reduce the risk of wildfires

Extinction is forever. This bill, if passed, would save species from being both federally- and state-listed as Endangered. Given the current federal destruction of natural resource programs, policies, funding and staffing, and given that environmental stressors are not getting any better, we want to provide a permanent source of protection for Oregon's wildlife.

Please understand that, if passed, this bill will have a significant positive impact on Oregon's society and economy, as well as wildlife and environment. The people of Oregon take pride in the beauty, abundant wildlife and expansive natural habitats that, at least until now, have graced our home. Travelers come to Oregon to experience the natural world and when fortunate, to encounter wildlife. This bill is an economic investment as much as it is an investment in Oregon's natural legacy because foundational multi-million-dollar economic industries in tourism, recreation, and agriculture have been relying on a strong foundation of the State's natural resources. To date, our State has failed to make any meaningful investments into these natural resources, and without that, the fragile ecosystems will suffer under the pressures of tourism and recreation, and consequently, the tourism, recreation, and agriculture sectors of Oregon's economy will deteriorate.

Hence, we endorse HB 4134, and we ask you to support, advocate for, and pass this bipartisan "1.25 % for Wildlife" bill. Let's make Oregon a beacon of hope for conservation. COIN and its members urge you to provide a stable and ongoing source of funding to these critical wildlife recovery and habitat restoration programs and vote yes on HB 4134.

Thank you,

Monica Tomosy,

Laura Allen,

On behalf of Consolidated Oregon Indivisible Network