

Submitter: Austin Sumpter

Committee: House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: Support for House Bill 4134

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Walters, Vice Chair Reschke, members of the House Committee On Revenue,

My name is Austin Sumpter. I live in the outskirts of Canby in Clackamas County, Oregon, specifically in Senate District 26 and House District 51. I come today to testify my strong support for House Bill 4134, the tax bill that will provide extra funding for the conservation of Oregon's endangered wildlife.

I've been enthusiastic about wildlife ever since I was eight, learning about their many remarkable attributes. Whether abroad in other parts of the world or present right in my own backyard, the natural world is home to many amazing species with their own unique contributions. Unfortunately, many of the world's animals, including within Oregon, are imperiled, being listed as either threatened or endangered under the U.S. Endangered Species Act. Organisms like wolverines, western pond turtles, gray wolves, Mazama newts, sage grouse, Canada lynx, northern leopard frogs, spotted owls, Columbia Gorge pikas, and many others face a slew of pressures from habitat loss to climate destabilization, introduced competitors, pollution, and other threats. As a young adult now, it makes me sad to know many species that make Oregon special are facing extinction. And the federal rollbacks on wildlife protections indicate clearly that Oregon must take initiative on its own now.

This session gives the Legislature the opportunity to take action with House Bill 4134, the "1.25% for Wildlife" bill. The previous version of this bill, House Bill 2977 in 2025, was tantalisingly close to passing, securing bipartisan support in the House of Representatives. It would raise the state's transient lodging tax from 1.5% to 2.75%, and the extra 1.25% of generated revenue will be used directly to support wildlife and habitat recovery efforts. In the face of a challenging session loaded with budget cuts coming, this will allow us to make a positive investment to keep Oregon's unique flora and fauna robust and help to ensure their continued survival into the future.

While I understand the angst some Oregonians have around taxes. But even if this were to pass, Oregon would still have one of the

lowest transient lodging tax rates in the country. And would it not be worthwhile for the state's economy? Many people in and out of our state enjoy our state's parks and campgrounds. They enjoy immersing themselves in nature, going birdwatching, wildlife viewing, and various other ways of enjoying the natural sights of the Beaver State. (Our state's nickname is even after a wildlife species!) The incremental increase in taxes would make for a vital trade to help keep species of wildlife and their habitats protected and robust in the long run. And, once more, the bipartisan support for this bill in the House last session reflects the broad support Oregon's wildlife and continued protection has among the people. Please be champions for Oregon's natural heritage and vote in support of this bill.