

Submitter:

Marcus Hall

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4134

Chair Nathanson and committee members, I support 1.25% for wildlife because of the critical importance of protecting our Oregon wildlife and habitat. There are many reasons to support this bill for preserving our environment. Specifically, water quality on which we all rely and protecting the natural areas that we enjoy visiting so very much. I could list all of the areas I love to visit for hiking and camping, but there are so many public lands that I enjoy and I would prefer to highlight another story instead.

This one starts with the last time I was in a jury selection at the Lane County courthouse fulfilling one of my civic duties along with dozens of other people. The judge would ask for basic info whenever someone began being interviewed for the jury with name, city, etc. but would add one additional ice-breaker question: what do you do for fun? At least 80% of all the people in that room, all Oregonians living in Lane County, would mention hiking, fishing, or hunting. To the answer of hunting, the judge would respond "bow or rifle?", to fishing and hiking, "what is your favorite spot?" Everyone could tell by the tone of the judge that this was what he had been asking potential jurors for years because if there is one near ubiquitous characteristics of Oregonians from all across the political and social spectrum it's an interest and love of our wild spaces.

I know that there are some who have come out in opposition to this bill. As one of the owners of a vineyard and winery in Oregon I know that outside tourism is important to our state economy. I am part of or have been part of organizations such as Travel Lane County and Oregon Winegrowers Association, both of which I am deeply disappointed to say are in opposition to this bill. I have read some of their reasoning and arguments for why they do not support this bill, but I believe their reasoning fails to include crucial points and is in the end short sighted. Some in opposition to this bill point out that the draw of tourism to our state is for the events, restaurants, and performances that occur in our state. Some may mention the trails as well, but often downplay how important the wildlife, fisheries, and forests are to that draw. As someone who interacts with tourists regularly as part of my business, I can attest to this importance. It is very commonly mentioned as part of the draw to our state for people who do not have the amazing habitat that we have in Oregon. It is very rare that I encounter a tourist that is indifferent to the natural beauty of our state.

This bill helps protect and ensure continued support for those wild spaces which are so valued and appreciated by Oregonians and thousands of others who come to our state specifically for those experiences. By tying a funding mechanism to the very tourism that is encouraged by our wild spaces we can ensure not only a stable

funding plan, but one where those of us who benefit from that tourism are also contributing to its protection. By protecting the habitat we can ensure that our businesses will continue to see tourism to our state because of its wild spaces. By protecting those wild spaces Oregonians will continue to love living here, desire to remain residents here, and have a unifying aspect to our identity, whether one is a fisher, hiker, or hunter.