

Submitter:

Janeen Olsen

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4134

Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Janeen Olsen. I am a fifth-generation Oregonian and the former Director of Marketing and Communications at the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF). I am writing today in support of House Bill 4134. I would like to speak to its tremendous potential for economic impact.

As the head of Marketing and Communications at OSF, I oversaw media relations, sales & marketing, audience development, publications, the welcome center, the exhibit center, the house staff, concessions, and the box office from 1998 to 2006. In those eight years, we increased ticket sales from \$13M per year to \$22M per year, making ticket revenue cover an astonishing 83% of OSF's budget, and establishing OSF as the largest professional nonprofit theatre in America. During this time, I served on the boards of many organizations to build these partnerships: the Oregon Culinary Association, the Oregon Restaurant Association, State Tourism Task Forces, various Visitors Bureaus, the Travel Industry of America, the Southern Oregon Economic Development Initiative, the Portland Chamber of Commerce President's Club, the Portland Advertising Federation, the Public Relations Society of America, and so on.

It is what I learned about marketing during my time at OSF that I wish to share with you today. HB 4134 doesn't just benefit outdoor recreationists and wildlife watchers; it benefits everyone in the tourism industry, and that benefits all of us.

OSF sits at 2,000 feet on the approach to the Siskiyou Mountains in a wild rural area with a very small population. That means that 85% of ticket buyers travel more than 125 miles to attend a play, and most travel much farther. At the onset of my time at OSF, I learned quickly that I wasn't selling plays: I was selling vacations, and to do so, we highlighted OSF by marketing Oregon through both paid and donated advertising.

We partnered with restaurants, lodgings, shops, and wineries. Next, we brought together the keepers of the natural world—from Crater Lake to the Oregon Caves, Mt. Ashland to the Rogue River and featured the natural beauty of Oregon, from its wild creatures to its wild habitats, with accompanying images of the donating restaurant or lodging, and then a night scene of the outdoor Elizabethan theatre glowing under the stars.

And our efforts to promote OSF and everything Southern Oregon had to offer were successful; we generated tens of millions in ticket revenue. And during this time, I contended with the first lodging tax increase of 1.0% in 2003 and its impact was minimal. When we surveyed ticket buyers at the time and, to say it simply, they hadn't even noticed it. After all, they are used to paying much higher rates everywhere else.

Looking back at it all, our paramount product is our wildlife and wild places. If we protect imperiled fish and wildlife, we protect their habitats. If we protect their habitats, we protect not just recreational tourism but all tourism. And if Oregon's tourism is thriving, we are thriving.

Please establish dedicated and sustained funding to conserve and recover Oregon's imperiled wildlife and habitats, which supports Oregon's thriving outdoor recreation and tourism industry.

Please support HB4134.

Thank you.