

Submitter: Annabelle Valdini

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

My name is Annabelle Valdini and I'm a high school student living in Portland, Oregon. I'm submitting this public comment because I want to urge my legislators to vote YES on HB 4134. This bill would increase the statewide lodging tax by 1.25% in order to fund conservation efforts for wildlife.

I was born and raised in Oregon; I've never lived anywhere else. I've been a birdwatcher since I was twelve, and I've never known a world not impacted by climate change. There have been record-setting wildfire seasons on the West Coast for as long as I can remember, and hearing stories about species being on the brink of extinction is simply normal life to me. This is unacceptable. As a city, a state, and a country, we need to do better. I want to someday start a family in this city, but I cannot accept that my children will be raised in a state in which countless species have been lost because of the climate crisis. I cannot accept that they will grow up in a world in which their fellow human beings refuse to pay an essentially negligible amount on every vacation they take so that vulnerable fish and wildlife are protected from extinction. This is not who we are, as Oregonians and as Americans. I need to be able to tell my future children that we stopped the extinction of these species. I need to be able to take them to Crater Lake, and to Multnomah Falls, and Tryon Creek, and every other incredible natural area our state claims, and not explain why so many of our state's amazing species have gone extinct.

Please, vote yes on this bill, because I need to believe that we, as people, are compassionate enough to accept a negligible tax on our vacations in order to further a greater common good. Yes, it's an increase in taxes, but if we can't accept such a minor increase with such major benefits for Oregon's wildlife, we need to take a hard look at our priorities. We need to consider what we want to tell our future children, and grandchildren, and hopefully great-grandchildren. That we saved ten dollars on a vacation, or that we, as a state, worked together to save hundreds of vulnerable and endangered species so they could be seen and enjoyed by future generations. I know which one I'd prefer.