



**Date:** February 4, 2026

**Name:** Scott Humpert, Explore Sisters

**Bill Number and Committee:** HB 4134 – Testimony to the House Committee on Revenue

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Reschke, Vice-Chair Walters, and members of the House Committee on Revenue,

My name is Scott Humpert, and I am the Executive Director of Explore Sisters. I appreciate the opportunity to convey my opposition to HB 4134.

Previously serving as the Senior Marketing Manager for Explore Lincoln City on the Oregon Coast for more than 10 years, it has been my privilege to serve the Sisters community over the past several years and steward the value that tourism brings to our local economy. Explore Sisters respectfully submits this testimony in strong opposition to HB 4134, which proposes an increase to the statewide Transient Lodging Tax (TLT). This legislation would significantly undercut the effectiveness of tourism as a driver of economic growth, particularly in small communities like ours that rely heavily on visitor spending.

In Sisters, tourism is our economy. Lodging taxes directly fund the destination marketing, visitor services and experience development that support small businesses throughout our community. As one of the newest DMOs in the state, Explore Sisters is just getting started. From off-peak marketing efforts, encouraging responsible visitation, embracing environmental stewardship, to sponsoring local events and tourism initiatives, achieving Dark Sky Community certification, participating as a key member of local leadership groups, and collaborating with neighboring DMOs, we support our community in many ways.

It is the successful collaboration between the local businesses and regional DMOs that help to generate economic activity and new jobs across Oregon, in even the most rural parts of our state. We focus much of our marketing efforts on growing *non-peak, off-season* travel because we know the importance of leveling out the seasonality of tourism to create year-round job security and stability for our workforce. That stability helps resorts support a healthy tourism economy.

At the state level, tourism has become a bedrock of Oregon's economy as a result of the Tourism Investment Proposal of 2003, which created Travel Oregon, established a dedicated funding source through the statewide transient lodging tax, and protected local funding investments in tourism, now the state's 4<sup>th</sup> largest economic sector.

During the recession of 2003, the Governor, legislature, and leaders across the state recognized that tourism was an untapped market, and that strategic and sustained investment in tourism was needed to establish Oregon as a travel destination for business and leisure.

While we understand the pressing demands to fund a myriad of statewide programs, Oregon cannot afford to tax its way to a sustainable economy; we must be committed to *growing* our way to a sustainable economy. Transient lodging tax is intended to be reinvested in communities to help grow local economies in support for Oregon's overall health and economic vitality.

The tourism industry has proven we will come to the table for initiatives that generate long term, strategic economic returns. Any increase to state Transient Lodging Tax deserves to be part of a consistent, defensible, and clear platform for the value of tourism as an economic development engine.

We oppose HR 4134 and ask for your no vote on this bill. Consumers have become increasingly price conscious, and increasing this tax would have negative impacts on Oregon as a competitive destination to visit. Many visitors in Oregon are fellow Oregonians, so this lodging tax increase will be paid by residents of the state, not just visitors, at a time when the cost of living is increasingly difficult.

This increased tax would also add additional costs to many smaller properties, some of whom are greatly struggling with the rising cost of running a business. All of these have the potential to lead to a decrease in future business, which would harm our local communities and our workforce.

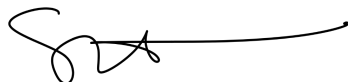
In Central Oregon and in 2024 alone, the impact of and benefits of the statewide TLT is clear:

- Nearly \$1.3 billion in visitor spending
- Average visitor spending of nearly \$100 per person per day
- Supported the creation of 10,730 jobs
- Nearly \$64 million in tax revenue was generated by visitor spending, of which \$27 million stayed local and nearly \$37 million went to the state of Oregon
- For every \$1 spent on marketing, the average visitor spends \$127+ in our communities

Your opposition to HB 4134 will allow your constituents and businesses to consistently plan for strategic investments and to continue important projects and partnerships vital to Oregon's economic viability.

Thank you for helping your tourism constituency remain stewards of Oregon's natural wonders. We will continue our work to support vibrant local communities to improve livability for all residents of Oregon.

Thank you for the privilege to submit this testimony for your consideration.



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