

Testimony in Support of HB 4134 | OR House Committee on Revenue | 2/4/26

Good afternoon, Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chairs Reschke and Walters, members of the committee, and esteemed colleagues.

For the record my name is David Ellenberger. I live in NE Portland and I serve as the Oregon Project Manager for Wildlands Network and have worked in the wildlife conservation field for 30 years.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of House Bill 4134. This bill is crucial to preserving Oregon's unique and increasingly vulnerable fish and wildlife by raising program funding for species conservation through a modest adjustment to the state's transient lodging tax.

Oregon is known for its diverse landscapes, from our towering forests and our high desert to our expansive coastlines and rugged mountains. It should come as no surprise that the wildlife within these ecosystems is just as diverse as these landscapes. Unfortunately, according to Oregon's 2015 State Wildlife Action Plan, 294 species and 11 native habitats require proactive restoration. What's worse, the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife does not have the funding needed to recover these species and their habitats, let alone funding to prevent additional species and habitats from joining this list. Immediate action is needed to ensure these species not only survive but thrive.

HB 4134 directs fresh resources toward species recovery, improving habitat connectivity and restoration efforts – among other programs which are vital for the health of Oregon's wildlife. It creates a sustainable funding mechanism by logically linking the tourism industry to conservation efforts. By modestly increasing the transient lodging tax, we ensure that visitors who come to experience our state's breathtaking ecosystems also contribute to protecting what draws them to Oregon in the first place. Moreover, this measure is fiscally responsible, as it creates a reliable and ongoing funding stream for conservation efforts without putting an undue burden on Oregon's taxpayers.

I strongly urge you to support HB 4134. Passing this bill will protect Oregon's wildlife and help ensure future generations can enjoy the same natural wonders that make our state so special. If enacted, this bill would mark a historic victory for wildlife conservation and provide a lasting and vital investment in Oregon's future, economy, and environment. Thank you.

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