

Submitter: Roberta Richards

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Greetings. My name is Roberta Richards. I am an Oregonian, a librarian, and a mother. Please consider my testimony in strong support of HB 4134 with the -1 amendment to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% and help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats.

Protecting the incomparable wildlife and habitat in our beautiful state cannot be ignored because we are busy with other priorities, as important as those other priorities may be. Loss of wildlife is not something that we can simply restore when we get around to it. Protecting this legacy is something we owe future generations of Oregonians, as well as the protection owed to the creatures themselves as fellow inhabitants on our precious planet.

In addition, this fee is very reasonable. When I visit other states I am sometimes surprised by how much I pay in lodging fees, but of course it is only fair that I should chip in to support the community I am visiting. Since we have no sales tax, the many tourists to Oregon pay comparatively little to support our state. This small fee helps to mend this imbalance.

Securing long-term dedicated funding to recover our most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats, is strongly supported by a majority of Oregonians. I urge you to support this landmark bill, which would dedicate long-term funding to recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife and habitats - all of which are critical for our state's tourism economy. Oregon's robust outdoor tourism economy — 2.6% of the state's GDP — supports 192,000 jobs and brings in \$16 billion in consumer spending. Investing in these resources now will continue to generate more economic opportunities for Oregon's communities in the future.

We cannot have a thriving tourism economy without healthy and abundant fish, wildlife, and the habitats that support them. This legislation would ensure we have both. At a time when the federal government is slashing funds and dismantling policies that protect our vulnerable fish and wildlife and their habitats, Oregon has a chance to set an example and protect our natural heritage. Doing so would make Oregon a national leader.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect our natural legacy and rich biodiversity, which make this state so special. Please pass HB 4134 -1 this legislative session! Thank you.