

Date: February 5, 2026

To: House Committee on Revenue: Representatives Nancy Nathanson, E. Werner Reschke, Jules Walters, Zach Hudson, Bobby Levy, Pam Marsh, Gregory Smith

Re: Support for House Bill 4134 with the -1 amendment

Dear Honorable Nathanson and Members of the Committee,

I write to express my strong support of HB 4134 with the -1 amendment to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% to help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife and habitats.

My name is Sue. I live in Southeast Portland. Like so many current residents, I moved to Oregon in 1990 for its wild places and species. I regularly fish and recreate throughout Oregon but especially in Central and Eastern Oregon, hiring local guides and supporting local restaurants and hotels (yeah Hotel Condon and the Condon Local in Condon and River Run Lodge and Honey Buns in Maupin!!). I'd be paying more to stay at places such as those as a result of this proposed tax and am happy to do so for the purposes for which it will be used.

I've read some of the testimony by restaurant owners, hotel owners and associations and some local governments opposing the bill because they assert Oregon's tourism economy is still recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic and will be made less competitive. These arguments miss the fundamental reason why tourists come to Oregon: it's priceless natural beauty and species. That is, our native fish, wildlife, and diverse habitats—including the high desert and sagebrush steppe—are central to what makes Oregon special and to why people choose to live, visit, and recreate here. We must do everything we can protect and recover these places and species for Oregonians and tourists now and going forward.

It's imperative that that we have a long-term, dedicated funding for conservation and to protect the outdoor recreation and tourism economy that depends on healthy lands and waters. The outdoor economy contributes 2.6% of Oregon's GDP, supports 192,000 jobs, and generates \$16 billion in consumer spending. This bill would protect that industry and those jobs by providing funds to recover Oregon's most at-risk species and habitats, including sagebrush ecosystems, connected wildlife corridors, and resilient landscapes that support biodiversity statewide.

Simply put, there will be no tourism economy in much of Oregon without healthy ecosystems. Protecting fish, wildlife, and habitats is not separate from economic vitality—it is foundational to it. Investing in conservation now supports local communities and long-term economic resilience.

It is especially important for the State of Oregon to step up now as federal funding and protections for wildlife and habitats are reduced. We have an opportunity—and a responsibility—to step forward and invest in our natural legacy. We would be a national leader and set an example for how states can

proactively protect biodiversity, reduce wildfire risk, support wildlife stewardship, and sustain healthy ecosystems. This would attract visitors and tourists!

Thank you for your service to Oregon!

Sue S.