

Submitter:

Sage Fox

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4134

Dear legislators,

Though I currently live in Seattle where I am attending law school, I am a sixth generation Oregonian born and raised in the Willamette Valley. I write in strong support of the increased transient lodging tax to generate much needed revenue for wildlife conservation in Oregon.

Despite a relatively low population and fairly recent history of development, Oregon struggles to keep species from extinction. Oregon's forests and rivers have been historically mismanaged and over-extracted with short-term profit prioritized over longterm viability of the state's natural resources. Oregon's native fish, particularly salmonids, suckers, sturgeon, and smelt are careening towards extinction and no longer fill their historic roles in nourishing people and supporting the ecosystems they exist in. Our birds, particularly owls, grouse, and small shorebirds, are also struggling. Our large mammals are rebounding, but populations remain far lower than in comparably wild states. And our less charismatic species - the amphibians and invertebrates - are in sharp decline.

Oregon has vast potential as an ecological tourism destination, and also as a biodiversity and biomass stronghold for the world. It is a recreational paradise, with some of the world's most beautiful rivers, volcanos, and deserts. Yet, Oregon is underfunded, often developed in a hurry, and struggles to balance its bottom-line with environmental conservation. Taxes on tourism and transient lodging are pragmatic ways to increase Oregon's revenue, support conservation, and avoid hurting Oregonians, since these costs are often borne by out-of-state residents or companies. This increased tax would go a long ways in supporting wildlife conservation and is well worth any temporary cost to businesses it impacts. Even with this increase, Oregon's lodging tax would remain among the lowest in the nation, with most of the cost paid by out-of-state visitors.

In sum, I urge you to pass this bill and contribute to improved stewardship of Oregon's wildlife. Our state needs this.

Sincerely,

Sage