

Oregon Legislature

Oregon House Revenue Committee

Re: House Bill 4134

February 4, 2026

Dear Oregon Legislative Committee:

I listened to the discussion of both support and opposition to HB 4134 which proposes to raise the state of Oregon's Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) from 1.5% to 2.75%.

I am an Oregon Business person. I have owned and operated multiple Oregon businesses over the last 25 years. That means I invested my life savings in Oregon Hospitality businesses, borrowed money with my personal guarantees, made payroll when revenues were insufficient to meet that obligation, and suffered through the COVID pandemic whose scars still remain today.

Ironically, prior to the start of the hearing on HB 4134, we listened to the hearing on HB 4052, a law which would grant up to \$1 Million in Income Tax Credits for new banks opening in Oregon. This proposed tax credit was expected to support up to 71,000 jobs in Oregon in the banking business. Yet, our Oregon legislatures appear to be ready to jam an 83% tax increase down the throats of many Oregonians (and consumers) in order to fund programs that are arguably disassociated from the Hospitality Business because Legislatures seem to believe they have no other sources of funding. I think you should start by defeating HB 4052 and direct those resources to improved wildlife conservation.

The hearing provided an opportunity to listen to supporters of HB 4134 outline the reasons for their support which included:

- The Lodging Tax is "largely" paid by visitors outside of Oregon.
- The Wildlife Conservation supports Tourism efforts.
- The added TLT is unnoticeable from most consumers and in no way will affect any consumer's lodging choices.

It is easy to be dismissive of the people who actually invest in, live, work, and garner their livelihood from any industry. It is easy to cast them off as "short-sighted" or unwilling to pay their share. To do so in this case is not just wrong, it is unconscionable.

Here are some reasons "Why" you should defeat HB 4134:

1. Tens of thousands of Hospitality jobs were lost during the Pandemic and we have not rebounded. People left our industry due to the roller-coaster ride the

Government authority put us through during the Pandemic with forced closings, weekly fluctuations in business operating hours, and failed Government leadership. Yet, at the start of the Pandemic, Oregon instituted a new “Corporate Activity Tax” on all businesses.

2. The Pandemic has left our industry in shambles. Most hotels in Portland are for sale and the loss in value has been catastrophic. Oregon is becoming “un-investable”. This is supported by recent studies ranking Oregon’s business climate in the bottom 10% nationwide. The testimony from the Portland Metro Chamber of Commerce executive speaks volumes to the true state of the business climate in Oregon. We are **“last in every major economic indicator nationwide”**. 2025 Employment is down 14% from pre-pandemic levels statewide.
3. It is easy to shift costs to someone else. As responsible business leaders we have a duty to look out for any added costs attached to the products and services we provide to our customers (which we like to call **“guests”**). The attitude that **“someone else, outside of Oregon, will pay the TLT”** is not only false; it is irresponsible. Many Oregonians pay the existing TLT (which is charged at the City, County and State levels). Depending on the destination, Oregonians pay up to 50% of the TLT in a particular locale like the Oregon Coast.

In my own businesses revenue is basically “flat” from pre-pandemic levels, especially when we consider the compounded annual growth rate of inflation the last 5-6 years. Yet, our costs for everything else from payroll, utilities, insurance, renovations, maintenance, supplies, and interest expense have increased dramatically. In looking out for our Guests, we cannot stand any more cost burden shifting to our customers. Our customers do see these added charges (in spite of one of the testifiers at the hearing who claimed that no one looks at the added TLT costs on their hotel bill). If that testifier were truly “on the ground” with us speaking to our guests every day, he would not have made such a ludicrous statement. And yet, that thinking seems pervasive among legislators! Just let someone else pay for it-someone we never have to speak to or face when we seek re-election.

I am not opposed to the preservation of wildlife, the importance of our natural resources and the environment. I belong to and support a program in the Pacific Northwest called “Long Live the Kings” that supports the Salmon population in the Salish Sea. I see how partnerships between the private sector and the Government can work.

I ask that you defeat HB 4134 for the very simple reason that it is an irresponsible added tax, paid for by many Oregonians, and further burdens an industry that supports hundreds of thousands of jobs in Oregon. Defeat it for the betterment of an industry that has seen nearly 1800 hotels and restaurants close over the last 5-6 years.

Please vote NO on HB 4134.

Sincerely,

Terrance J. Bichsel

Rivertide Suites Hotel

Seaside Oregon