

Dear Chair Nathanson and Committee members,

As a lifelong nature enthusiast and a wildlife advocate, I am writing in strong support of HB 4134.

I moved to Oregon over 10 years ago for the natural recreation available in the state. I was drawn to the wild places and the wildlife that call the Pacific Northwest home. When I see light sparkling through branches and reflecting off the moss of a tree in the gorge, and look down at a slimy banana slug, hearing the sounds of the rushing water of a nearby stream, I know I made the right choice.

Oregon is known for its wildlife and idyllic landscapes. I've seen the animated look of excitement on my nephew's face, visiting from the Midwest, when spotting a sea star in a tidepool while on a visit to the coast. I've heard hikers enthusiastically exclaim "Was that a pika!?" after noticing the unmistakable high-pitched squeak when visiting the gorge. People travel to and around Oregon for the natural beauty and wildlife experiences that other states cannot offer. Oregon's landscapes and wildlife are at the heart of what makes this state extraordinary.

The economic case for supporting this legislation makes sense. Wildlife-based recreation in Oregon generates about \$1.2 billion annually and supports more than 11,000 jobs. Wildlife watching alone contributes \$579 million in direct spending and \$23.5 million in state and local tax revenue each year. Without wildlife, this draw to visit Oregon diminishes, impacting the benefits to state and local communities. We have a shared responsibility and a mutual benefit for ensuring that Oregon's wildlife and habitats are protected.

A clear majority of Oregonians support securing long-term, dedicated funding to recover our most vulnerable species and ecosystems. HB 4134 represents a thoughtful and forward-looking solution. Oregon has the third lowest state lodging tax rate out of all 50 states. Raising the rate by 1.25 percentage points would not change that ranking. Even considering local lodging tax rates, Oregon's communities are still below, or significantly below, similarly situated out-of-state communities.

A healthy tourism economy depends on wildlife and healthy habitats.

This is a rare opportunity to make a lasting investment in Oregon's biodiversity and natural legacy. I respectfully urge you to support and pass HB 4134 this legislative session. As an Oregon taxpayer this is what I want my tax dollars to fund, now and for future generations.

Sincerely,

Tonia Nelson