

Submitter:

Max Light Pacheco

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB4134

Hello Representatives,

My name is Max Light-Pacheco (He/Him), and I am a Portland resident. I am writing this testimony to advocate for Oregon's ecosystem engineers, climate mitigation experts, arborists, pest management experts, and our fellow community members: the flora and fauna of Oregon. Since I was little, I have been fascinated with wildlife. I grew up in West Los Angeles, one of the most urban environments in the world. But even in this human landscape, wildlife, including thousands of insect species, black phoebes, raccoons, and cougars, navigated this complex terrain and provided important ecological services such as pollination, pest management, and decomposition of decaying matter. I turned this passion into my career, where I studied Wildlife, Fish, and Conservation Biology at UC Davis. Since I graduated in 2016, I have worked and volunteered with several nonprofits focused on environmental progress and lived and worked in Portland for the last four years. I was heartened by the successes these organizations and others were able to make on meager budgets. I also saw how the lack of funding negatively impacted many of those in the environmental field. The pay for most positions is not a livable wage and it is nearly impossible for most people in the field to advance into roles with reasonable wages because of poor funding. While environmental-focused groups and government agencies have made do with little investment, nature has provided immense wealth to the businesses and communities of Oregon.

Outdoor recreation alone is a \$16 billion add in the benefits from pollinators, carbon sequestration, pest management, reduction of disease spread from decomposition, and you are looking at hundreds of billions of dollars in value. While I believe in the inherent value of wildlife regardless of productivity for capitalism, I do understand how our system, as it stands requires economic justification. A 1.25% tax added to lodging is not only a reasonable ask for those who visit our state and benefit from our lack of sales tax, but it is a reasonable ask for our hotel and hospitality industry, who are dependent on our natural wonders for their guests. Of Travel Oregon's top five reasons to visit Oregon, 3 out of 5 are natural resources.

I have heard that a concern has been brought this could impact the number of conferences in Portland, Bend, and other cities. I find this to be a false argument. The reason people want to host conferences in Oregon are doing it because Oregon is an attractive environment for environmental enthusiasts, who are going to be more inclined to attend a conference in a desirable location. Portland and Bend are not like Las Vegas with the shows and spectacle, New York or Los Angeles with the glitz and

glamour, or New Orleans with its history. Oregon has its parks, natural wonders, and wildlife. Accommodation entities should be willing to have its guests provide funds to maintain the reason why people come to Oregon. If we continue to see degradation of habitats and loss of wildlife, our tourist industry will face a larger existential crisis.

1.25% will help the state address the budget gap and help maintain critical services. It will also maintain some of the only living wage positions in the environmental field. Our state can afford a 1.25% tax on lodging. We can't afford the loss of more jobs, which help support our economy, our key reasons people want to visit Oregon in the first place, and the wildlife that allow for our outdoor recreation and agriculture industry. Please commit to prioritizing the long-term benefits of environmental protection over the short-term concerns around a standard lodging tax (and as a big fan of travel, we do have a low cost for lodging taxes in Oregon. I have paid at least that much on trips to cities throughout the United States, Canada, and Western Europe). Please support this bill and let's make a new law that benefits all Oregonians, including those with fur.