



**Date:** February 9, 2026

**Name:** Scott Larson, President & CEO, Visit Central Oregon

**Bill Number and Committee:** HB 4148 – Testimony to the House Committee on Revenue

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Reschke, Vice-Chair Walters, and members of the House Committee on Revenue,

My name is Scott Larson, and I am the President & CEO of Visit Central Oregon, the Destination Marketing and Management Organization for Central Oregon. I appreciate the opportunity to convey our opposition to HB4148.

Having previously worked for both Chambers and DMOs in rural areas, I understand the unique challenges and constraints faced by increases in tourism. I also understand the value that tourism brings to the local economies of our state. It is my honor to serve the amazing region of Central Oregon and to work to support all of the communities that we serve and represent, including local visitor centers, regional visitor associations, Chambers, and all of the tourism industry business stakeholders.

It is the successful collaboration between the local and regional DMOs and Travel Oregon that is helping to generate economic impact and create new jobs across Oregon, in even the most rural parts of our state. At DMOs, we focus our tourism development on off-peak and shoulder season marketing and many other programs including destination development initiatives because we understand the importance of reinvesting in the places that we love.

For example, at Visit Central Oregon, we have implemented the following programs to support the resources so many people enjoy:

- *In Central Oregon, funds were leveraged with local tourism resources to increase access to the outdoors for people with disabilities, to increase our partnership with Leave No Trace and other outdoor recreation entities, trail maintenance and development, and more. Additionally, funds have been awarded to support projects at Kah-Nee-Ta Resort, supporting our Tribal partners as well. Following this current cycle, the Future Fund grant program will have given over \$1.9 million dollars toward 34 projects like these that have broad benefits to both residents and visitors alike.*



At the state level, tourism has become a bedrock of Oregon's economy as a result of the Tourism Investment Proposal of 2003, which created Travel Oregon, established a dedicated funding source through the statewide transient lodging tax, and protected local funding investments in tourism.

During the recession of 2003, the Governor, legislature, and leaders across the state recognized that tourism was an untapped market and that strategic and sustained investment in tourism was needed to establish Oregon as a travel destination for business and leisure.

While we understand the desire for increased funding, **we are opposed to HB 4148 as written and ask for a no vote on this bill without an amendment to include a grandfather clause that honors the 2003 agreements**. We believe in working together to find a compromise between the tourism industry and local governments, and we believe in seeking a solution that gives stability to a proven economic engine while also supporting the needs of local communities. Regardless of what is determined for future splits, reducing funding for one of Oregon's largest economic drivers is shortsighted, in direct opposition to the Governor's Prosperity Road Map, and simply doesn't make sense. During a time when the economy is sputtering, reducing funding to our tourism economy would be a mistake that would harm all Oregonians and would reduce our ability to leverage these funds for our communities.

#### **Regional Economic Impacts:**

In Central Oregon and in 2024 alone, the impact of and benefits of the statewide Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) is clear:

- Nearly \$1.3 billion in visitor spending
- Average visitor spending of nearly \$100 per person per day
- Supported the creation of 10,730 jobs
- Nearly \$64 million in tax revenue was generated by visitor spending, of which \$27 million stayed local and nearly \$37 million went to the state of Oregon
- For every \$1 spent on marketing, the average visitor spends \$175 in our communities

There are countless programs and stories from Central Oregon that have been galvanized by the lodging tax investments to create sustainable product development and destination development initiatives. These include things like supporting smaller, rural communities with marketing some of the amazing amenities they already have as well as increasing partnerships with other outdoor recreation non-profits like Leave No



Trace. Without a clause to honor historical agreements, our state's economy will suffer and so will our local communities. We believe that this bill is close, but not the solution as it is currently written.

Your opposition to HB 4148 will allow your constituents and businesses in our region to continue to do the great work that is currently underway, and to continue important projects and partnerships vital to promoting while protecting our future resources.

Thank you for helping your tourism constituency remain stewards of Oregon's natural wonders. We will continue our work to support vibrant local communities to improve livability for all residents of Oregon.

Thank you for the privilege to submit my testimony for your consideration.

*Scott Larson*

*President & CEO*

*Visit Central Oregon*