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On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

For creatures great and small that rely on a healthy environment to thrive, these are dark days indeed. Climate change, accelerated extinction, diminishing biodiversity and constant threats of more exploitation and destruction thanks to terrible recent federal actions are threatening wildlife and the ecosystems they depend on to thrive.

That's why, as a native Oregonian whose family has had a home in Sisters for more than 25 years, I am hoping you will strongly support and vote for house bill 4134 or "1.25% for Wildlife." This bill offers a glimmer of hope as a solid way forward to help raise funds from the statewide tourism tax to provide much-needed support for wildlife locally and throughout the state.

Because the majority (65%) of the funding would come from out-of-state visitors who pay state transient lodging tax when they partake in the bounty of our great state, it makes good economic and environmental sense for them to contribute in this way. Oregon has the third lowest state lodging tax rate among all 50 states, and raising that rate by a miniscule 1.25% would not change that.

Anyone who tells you that supporting wildlife in Oregon is not good for business is 100% wrong. It makes a massive difference especially for Oregon's rural areas. I was a vice president of one of Oregon's largest advertising agencies and for five years, we worked on the City of Newport tourism campaign. Whale watching, fishing and crabbing were a huge driver of room tax revenue during the off-peak fall and winter seasons, filling hotel rooms, restaurants and retailers during that time that would otherwise be in a world of hurt. Local wildlife was the very reason tourists came, stayed and spent. It's the same in Central Oregon, where birders, hunters and fishing enthusiasts visit the region because of abundant outdoor and wildlife opportunities offered in our area. Now, it's time to make sure that this economic driver continues to thrive for the good of the entire state, providing a sustainable way to attract visitors from near and far.

And what a small price to pay. The 1.25% for Wildlife bill will fund critical actions and programs essential to the continued survival of many of Oregon's most vulnerable native birds, fish and animal species. It is a commonsense and bipartisan approach for sustainably funding important programs meant to conserve and restore Oregon's 300+ vulnerable species.

Investing in Oregon's natural legacy is an idea whose time has come. 1.25% for Wildlife could transform it into a reality. I appreciate your support and your efforts to

take action to pass this bill and help Oregon's wildlife thrive for the benefit of our state.

Thank you

-Darcie Meihoff

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