

Submitter: Jim Hammett  
On Behalf Of:  
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134  
Chair, Members of the Committee,

My name is Jim Hammett, and I live in Grant County with rangeland in Malheur County. I'm writing in support of HB 4134 because it is the rare tax bill that minimizes the financial burden on rural Oregonians while ensuring the state meets responsibilities it has consistently underfunded.

I understand and respect the instinct to oppose any new tax. But HB 4134 is structured so that the majority of the revenue comes from out-of-state visitors, not from the people who live and work in Eastern and Central Oregon.

Oregon currently has the lowest lodging tax in the region. Visitors coming from Idaho, Washington, Nevada, and California already pay higher rates at home. HB 4134 simply brings Oregon closer to the regional norm and ensures that visitors who use our public lands contribute to the impacts they help create.

For rural counties with small tax bases, this is one of the only ways to secure needed funding without increasing the burden on local residents.

Counties like Grant, Harney, Malheur, Lake, Wheeler, Crook, and Baker manage enormous landscapes with limited budgets. When the state underfunds wildlife responsibilities, the costs don't disappear—they fall on:

- County general funds
- Sheriffs and road departments
- Private landowners and ranchers

HB 4134 doesn't create new programs. It funds the work the state is already obligated to do, so rural counties aren't forced to absorb those costs themselves.

Non-game species—pollinators, raptors, amphibians, small mammals—are the foundation of healthy ecosystems and working lands. When they decline, the state ends up paying far more later in:

- Emergency invasive weed control
- Habitat repair
- Wildlife conflict response (wolf depredation)
- Losses to agriculture and recreation economies

HB 4134 is **\*\*preventative maintenance\*\***, the fiscally conservative approach. It is far

cheaper to keep systems functioning than to rebuild them after failure.

Without HB 4134, rural counties will continue paying for state-level wildlife responsibilities out of already thin budgets. With HB 4134, visitors—who drive much of the demand—pay their share, and rural residents get relief.

For senators who oppose taxes on principle, this bill offers something unusual...a tax that protects your constituents from higher costs, prevents larger expenses in the future, and keeps Oregon competitive with surrounding states.

I urge you to support HB 4134.

Respectfully,  
Jim Hammett  
Grant County / Malheur County