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Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
900 Court St. NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

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Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane and Members of the Committee,

My name is Joseph Vaile, and I have worked in natural resources in southern Oregon for over 25 years. Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 4134.

In my career I have worked to reduce wildfire hazards in fire prone wildland urban interface areas, on threatened and endangered species conservation, and I currently work with state and federal agencies and livestock producers to reduce conflicts with wolves.

HB 4134 offers a practical, community-minded approach to strengthening Oregon's economy while protecting the natural resources that sustain it. It directly funds the Oregon Wolf Grant program, which is an essential promise made to reduce conflict to benefit wildlife and livestock producers.

The bill would modestly increase the statewide transient lodging tax by 1.25%, from 1.5% to 2.75%. New funding is dedicated to ODFW for at-risk species conservation, ODA for wildlife conflict and invasive species programs, and to the Oregon Conservation Corps for wildfire mitigation. In doing so, HB 4134 establishes reliable funding to maintain the landscapes and wildlife that drive tourism, recreation and rural livelihoods.

Outdoor recreation and nature-based tourism are among Oregon's strongest economic engines, particularly in rural communities. These issues are intrinsically linked to transient lodging taxes. From coastal towns and high desert communities to gateway towns near public lands, local businesses depend on healthy rivers, forests and wildlife. Hotels, outfitters, guides, and retailers benefit when visitors come to experience Oregon's natural beauty. When fish, wildlife and landscapes decline, rural economies feel the impact.

HB 4134 makes strategic investments in wildlife conservation. Proactive conservation reduces the need for costly emergency interventions and federal species listings that can raise costs for landowners, businesses and taxpayers. Enabling ODFW to address declining species early is far less expensive than attempting recovery after species are close to extinction. In this way, the bill helps protect both public resources and private economic opportunity.

The proposed increase is modest and fair. Even at 2.75%, Oregon's statewide lodging tax would remain among the lowest in the nation. Most of the revenue would be paid by out-of-

state visitors, allowing tourists who benefit from Oregon's landscapes to help sustain them. This minimizes the burden on residents. Lodging tax rates at this level do not discourage tourism and investments in natural amenities generate long-term economic returns.

Wildfire, development and increased recreation are placing unprecedented strain on Oregon's wildlife and communities, but HB 4134 provides a solution. It strengthens rural economies, supports local jobs and ensures that Oregon remains a destination for generations to come.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to support HB 4134.

Sincerely,

/s/ Joseph Vaile

Joseph Vaile

Senior Representative, Northwest Program
Defenders of Wildlife

