



Date: February 25, 2026

Name: Mackenzie Ballard, Oregon Destination Association

HB 4134 – Testimony to the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

Dear Chair Broadman, Vice Chair McLane and honorable members of the Committee.

My name is Mackenzie Ballard, and I am the Managing Director for the Oregon Destination Association (ODA). For over thirty years, ODA has served as the unified industry voice for Oregon's local and regional Destination Management Organizations (DMOs).

ODA represents nearly 100 DMOs statewide, covering all seven tourism regions and every tourism community in Oregon. On behalf of the nearly 200,000 Oregon residents employed in tourism, I am writing to express ODA's strong opposition to HB 4134.

Given the current economic climate, now is not the appropriate time to increase a tax on the tourism industry, Oregon residents and visitors. Tourism is a key industry serving as a direct funding source to Oregon's economic recovery and future vitality.

The foundation for Oregon's tourism economy was laid through the 2003 Tourism Investment Proposal. This initiative led to the creation of Travel Oregon, established a dedicated funding stream via the statewide transient lodging tax, and protected local investments in tourism. During the 2003 recession, state leaders recognized tourism as an untapped market and made strategic, sustained investments to position Oregon as a premier destination for both business and leisure travel.

Since 2003, tourism has consistently supported Oregon's workforce, economic viability, and quality of life for residents. Over the past two decades, the return on investment from the statewide Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) is undeniable:

- Visitor spending in Oregon has more than doubled, growing from \$6.5 billion in 2003 to \$14 billion today.
- State and local TLT tax revenues have more than tripled, increasing from \$200 million in 2003 to \$650 million today.
- Demand has shifted, with visitors now spending an additional 2.7 million nights in hotels compared to 2008. Overnight visitors also spend more than residents at restaurants, shops, and recreation businesses.
- Since 2003, there has been steady annual growth: 4% in spending, 5% in earnings, 1.6% in employment, and 4.8% in tax revenue, all outpacing inflation.

The success of Oregon tourism is predicated upon collaboration between local Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and Travel Oregon. These partnerships stimulate economic activity and job creation across the state, particularly benefiting rural regions and the recovery necessary in Portland. DMOs strategically concentrate their tourism development and marketing efforts during non-peak seasons, thereby fostering year-round job security and stability for communities.

The Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP) has facilitated partnerships between Travel Oregon and regional DMOs across all seven tourism regions. Below are a few illustrative examples of the tourism commitment to healthy communities:

Eastern Oregon: In 2025, 40 Oregon communities worked together to achieve the nation's first statewide "Destination Verified" status with trusted accessibility travel platform Wheel the World, ensuring disabled visitors and Oregonians alike can explore detailed listings and receive tailored recommendations based on their specific needs. Eastern Oregon DMO's Tourism bring marketing and outreach expertise through partnerships with other state and federal agencies, non-profits and businesses to address broad community challenges such as responsible recreation, wildfire safety or congestion management efforts at well-loved destinations.

Central Oregon: TLT funds have been integrated with local tourism resources to establish a Commercial Air Service Development and Marketing Fund. This initiative facilitated the successful application for a federal Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant, largely expanding commercial air service to the region and bolstering regional business development and diversification.

Portland Region: This region encompasses Portland, Gresham, Clackamas County's urban areas, and all of Washington and Columbia counties. Partnership investments have supported convention sales through the Visitor Development Fund (VDF) and transformative local projects such as the James Beard Public Market, preservation of Willamette Falls Locks, enhancements to the Salmonberry Trail trailhead, facility upgrades at the Mt. Hood Community College Aquatic Center, and improved bicycle tourism infrastructure on the Banks-Vernonia Trail.

Southern Oregon: RCTP investments have funded mountain bike trails and events. For instance, the Mountain of the Rogue Trail System and the Ashland Watershed Trail Alliance. Travel Oregon collaborated with local partners to host the Klamath Basin Rural Tourism Studios, resulting in the creation of a Klamath Basin landing page, bicycle maps, and other tourism products. To address demand for peak visitor experiences, Travel Oregon is also working with Discover Klamath to develop content and structure for a spring stakeholder workshop.

These examples are just a few among countless programs statewide that have been strengthened by state lodging tax reinvestment, fueling sustainable marketing and product development. Such opportunities are especially vital for our rural communities transitioning from resource-based economies to those that include tourism management and marketing. It is essential to maintain this momentum.

The Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) is most effective when reinvested in programs that help grow Oregon's economy. Any increases to the TLT should be crafted in collaboration with the tourism industry as part of a long-term economic strategy for the entire state. This partnership was not extended to tourism as HB 4134 was crafted.

We urge you to oppose HB 4134 to ensure that Oregon remains competitive with other tourism destinations in a highly volatile and competitive market. By opposing this bill, you help safeguard the viability of Oregon's tourism industry and allow essential recovery projects and partnerships to continue, which are vital for the state's economic future.

Thank you for supporting your tourism constituency and helping us remain stewards of Oregon's natural wonders. We are committed to continuing our work to support vibrant local communities and improve livability for all Oregonians.

Thank you for your time and consideration and for your service to Oregon.

Mackenzie Ballard, Director
Oregon Destination Association