

Submitter: Andrew Simrin
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Chair Broadman, Vice-chair McLane and committee members,

I am a lifelong Oregonian from Eugene. I enjoy our wildlife and their habitats that bring great quality of life for all Oregonians and visitors alike. I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 4134 with -3 amendments to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% and help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats.

Here in Eugene we have hotels and lodging establishments raise their nightly prices to exorbitant levels, to where it becomes price gouging, and out of state visitors still pay the elevated rates. We should investigate the price gouging, but we know that people will pay a bit more for a better quality of life.

We also know that we won't need to keep asking for this funding every two years. Oregon is an incredibly special place, and our state's identity is closely tied to its rich natural heritage, including native fish, wildlife, and the habitats that support them. Oregonians' love for the outdoors is known throughout this country and beyond. Oregonians like me are proud of our natural heritage and want to see it thrive for future generations.

As federal funding and protections for wildlife and habitats are reduced, Oregon has an opportunity—and a responsibility—to step forward and invest in its natural legacy. Securing long-term dedicated funding to recover our most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats, is strongly supported by a majority of Oregonians. I urge you to support this landmark bill, which would dedicate long-term funding to recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife and habitats - all of which are critical for our state's tourism economy. Oregon's robust outdoor tourism economy - 2.6% of the state's GDP - supports 192,000 jobs and brings in \$16 billion in consumer spending. Investing in these resources now will continue to generate more economic opportunities for Oregon's communities in the future.

We cannot have a thriving tourism economy without healthy and abundant fish, wildlife, and the habitats that support them. This legislation would ensure we have both. At a time when the federal government is slashing funds and dismantling policies that protect our vulnerable fish and wildlife and their habitats, Oregon has a chance to set an example and protect our natural heritage. Doing so would make Oregon a national leader.

We know that our transient lodging tax would still be among the third lowest in the nation and is mostly paid by visitors coming from out of our state. Many visit our campgrounds, hotels, and other lodging accommodations to visit wildlife and their

habitats, even passively.

There are some parts of this legislation that I'm not a fan of, such as the funding of multipliers for livestock loss from suspected and actual wolf predation, however the legislation funds many other important ODFW programs.

This legislation will prevent endangered species conflicts.

Recovering a species once it is imperiled enough to warrant listing under the state and federal Endangered Species Act is costly and can create a lot of conflict. By investing in proactive conservation, HB 4134 can avoid costly emergency intervention and conflicts down the road. It is an effective and fiscally responsible policy that will help wildlife and communities now and in the future.

This is a once-in-a-generation opportunity to protect our natural legacy and rich biodiversity, which make this state so special. Please pass HB 4134 with -3 amendments this legislative session!

Thank you.