



Date: February 25, 2026

Name: Willamette Valley Visitors Association

Bill Number and Committee: HB 4134 – Testimony to the Senate Committee on Finance

Dear Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane, Vice-Chair Walters, and members of the Senate Committee on Finance,

On behalf of the Willamette Valley Visitors Association (WVVA), I respectfully submit testimony in opposition to House Bill 4134.

WVVA represents communities, lodging providers, and visitor-facing businesses across seven counties in the Willamette Valley (SW Clackamas, Yamhill, Marion, Polk, Linn, Benton and non-coastal Lane). Our role is to support sustainable tourism as an economic development tool, one that creates jobs, supports small businesses, and helps communities reinvest in infrastructure, facilities, and quality of life improvements that benefit both visitors and residents.

While we recognize the Legislature faces difficult funding decisions, HB 4134 would increase the statewide transient lodging tax in a way that risks undermining one of Oregon's most successful economic development strategies. **If this bill passes, for the first time in state history, lodging tax revenue would be diverted away from its intended tourism purpose to fund five unrelated agencies. That shift alone should concern every legislator.**

Proponents of HB 4134 argue the increase is small and will go unnoticed by visitors. In reality, it nearly doubles the statewide lodging tax while directing zero dollars back to tourism promotion or tourism facilities, the very economic development engine that generates these revenues. It is not the responsibility of Oregon's visitors to backfill state budgets. While these are important statewide issues, **HB 4134 establishes a precedent that allows one state agency to cannibalize another agency's dedicated funding stream.** Specifically, it allows the Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife to draw from a revenue source that was statutorily created and protected for Travel Oregon. **Once that wall is breached, no dedicated fund is truly protected.**

By setting this precedent, future proposals could be structured in similar ways. For example, if the Legislature allowed the Oregon State Police or emergency response programs to redirect gas tax revenue because drivers benefit from safer roads, it would undermine the entire transportation funding model. This bill invites ongoing inter-agency raids on protected funds. **I strongly believe we should not set a precedent that pits state agencies against one another, as that does not serve Oregonians.**

Tourism organizations like WVVA often reinvest lodging tax dollars through grants to address the impacts of visitation, such as expanding trail systems, addressing habitat affected by high use, and supporting infrastructure that keeps experiences positive for both visitors and residents. Over the past five years, WVVA has funded over \$400,000 in grants to enhance the visitor experience or mitigate impacts of visitors.

This argument of a nominal increase also ignores the lived experience of visitors, who in the Willamette Valley already pay, on average, more than 10% in lodging taxes at checkout. I strongly believe the long-term negative impact of this bill is beyond hurting Oregon competitive advantage among the western states as an affordable travel destination, it sets a really

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please vote no on HB4134.

Sincerely,

Tori Middelstadt

Tori Middelstadt
Executive Director
Willamette Valley Visitors Association