

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

Greetings Senators,

I am writing in strong support of HB 4134. This novel bill has bi-partisan support in the Oregon legislature and is designed to establish a broad base of support across the state, among both rural and urban Oregonians (which is phenomenal in itself!). More than 85 organizations representing wildlife conservationists, hunters, anglers, recreationalists, and farming and ranching interests, support HB 4134, along with more than 125 urban and rural businesses. More than 70% of Oregonians believe protecting Oregon's biodiversity should be a legislative priority, and more than 80% say that biodiversity is important in our daily lives.

The funding generated by HB 4134 will support a host of programs to support Oregon's wildlife and the habitats that sustain them, by raising the state transient lodging tax (TLT) by 1.25%. The bill would provide the only dedicated funding source to help protect and recover non-game (aka "bait and bullet") wildlife species, including mammals, amphibians, reptiles, fish, and pollinators. More than 320 of Oregon's wildlife species are imperiled and at risk of extinction and the numbers are increasing. There is currently no dedicated state funding source to support our wildlife, and the recent elimination of federal funds for wildlife exacerbates the problem.

My understanding is that the hotel and restaurant folks have expressed concern about impacts of the bill on tourism. As the 25+-year owner of a vacation rental on the North Oregon Coast I do not share these concerns. In actuality, this bill will support Oregon tourism by protecting the wildlife, natural resources, and outdoor recreation opportunities that bring 90% of the visitors to Oregon. Oregon's tourism is booming, yet our TLT is the third lowest in the country. That ranking would not change when the bill passes. Studies in other states have shown that tourism demand is not sensitive to modest lodging tax increases. Further, nearly 2/3 of Oregon's visitors are folks from other states and countries.

Thank you for considering my testimony and please vote YES on HB 4134. You will be helping to create a legacy of leadership and creativity to fund programs to support Oregon wildlife, the habitats they depend on to survive, and Oregon's robust nature-based tourist economy.

Best,  
Roberta Jortner  
Portland, Oregon