

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

Written Testimony of Russell Hoeflich to members of the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue in Support of HB 4143

Chair Broadman, Vice Chair McLane, Senators Anderson, Patterson, and Taylor, I take this opportunity to request your vote in support of HB4134.

I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 4134 to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% and help recover Oregon's most vulnerable fish, wildlife, and habitats, and prepare our communities for the impacts of Climate Change, including a focus on investment to reduce the risks of catastrophic loss from wildfire.

I want to outline why I believe it is urgent that you vote in support of the 1.25% for Wildlife bill HB 4143. I trust that, like me, you have been following the Governor's Climate Executive Order 25-26, which prioritizes and accelerates the adoption of climate-resilient strategies to deliver benefits for communities and ecosystems. With so many wildfires close to home, I trust you are as concerned as I am about the increase in smoke-filled days, property loss, and smoke so thick it becomes difficult to breathe. This escalating health hazard is hitting our seniors and vulnerable communities extremely hard. It is also forcing many to leave the streets for the safety of our filtered homes. This is surely detrimental to tourism, commerce, and business overall.

Members of the Committee, one of the top priorities of HB 4134 is to develop a workforce that works with homeowners in the most fire-prone communities across our state to achieve defensible space around their property and implement vital home and business hardening, which is essential to effectively buffer our communities from catastrophic fires like those we saw in Otis a few years back or those seen last year in LA.

This bill is estimated to create approximately 450 to 720 restoration-focused jobs, according to a 2024 report commissioned by Travel Oregon.

What I love about this lodging fee increase is that, based on historic records, 65% of the Transient Lodging Tax is paid by Non-Oregonians. I have traveled across the country for my work, and I am struck by how our lodging tax is among the lowest in the nation.

Even with the 1.25% increase IN THE HOTEL LODGING fee, it would remain among the lowest in the country, and for an average weekend getaway for a family would cost about the same as a coffee at the local shop.

The urgency of the climate emergency we face requires targeted action. ODFW has outlined bold actions, impressively articulated in its new State Wildlife Action Plan,

that will benefit both people and wildlife in the communities we all call home. They need the resources identified in this hotel-motel fee increase to address the climate challenge head-on.

Senators, this is one of those moments when you can boldly support a bill that will have an enduring benefit for all Oregonians. I ask that you support HB 4134.

With gratitude for your leadership, and my deep hope that you will do everything in your power to pass HB 4134 and I look forward to the Senate Finance Committee hearing tomorrow.

Sincerely,

Russ

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