

Submitter: Tracy Meese

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

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

My name is Tracy Meese, and I am the CEO/President of the Corvallis Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate the opportunity to submit testimony in opposition to HB 4134.

The Corvallis Chamber of Commerce represents businesses across hospitality, retail, food service, professional services, and nonprofits. Our mission is to support a strong, resilient local economy and ensure Corvallis remains competitive for visitors, events, and business investment.

We oppose HB 4134 because increasing the state Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) would place additional strain on Oregon's tourism economy at a time of growing economic uncertainty. In Corvallis, the most recent City of Corvallis community and economic reporting identify the economy as the number one concern for residents and community leaders. Policies that risk suppressing economic activity deserve careful consideration.

Tourism is not abstract in our community. Visitor spending directly supports local jobs, wages, and small businesses, including hotels, restaurants, coffee shops, retailers, attractions, and service providers. Tourism is one of Oregon's largest economic engines and plays a critical role in sustaining communities with limited alternative industries.

Raising the TLT by 1.25% would increase the cost of overnight stays and could reduce demand, particularly for event-related travel, conferences, sports tournaments, and university-related visitation. Travelers and meeting planners are increasingly price-sensitive, and even modest increases can influence destination decisions. At the end of 2025, Corvallis lodging occupancy stood at 49.8%, meaning roughly half of available rooms went unfilled throughout the year. Additional tax burdens create another headwind for local lodging providers and the broader visitor economy.

Oregon's current tourism funding system works because it is intentional and predictable. The Transient Lodging Tax has historically been dedicated to tourism-related purposes that drive economic activity. Expanding its use to fund species conservation represents a significant shift in intent and sets a precedent for directing TLT revenue toward a broad range of unrelated programs. These risks diluting a targeted economic development tool and create uncertainty for communities that rely on lodging revenue to support tourism promotion and economic vitality.

At a time when economic resilience is a top priority for Oregon communities, we respectfully urge the Committee to oppose HB 4134 and to explore alternative

funding mechanisms for conservation that do not place additional burdens on visitors, local businesses, and local economies.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Tracy Meese

CEO / President

Corvallis Chamber of Commerce