

Submitter: Emma Gashi

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4134

Dear Chair Broadman and members of the Senate Committee On Finance and Revenue,

My name is Emma Gashi and I am a Wildlife Biologist from Corvallis, Oregon. I am thrilled to be submitting this testimony in strong support of HB 4134 to increase the state lodging tax by 1.25% and help protect the beautiful nature of our state!

As a wildlife biologist, I have seen how a lack of funding puts wildlife and our greater ecosystems at risk. Securing long-term dedicated funding for wildlife and habitats protection is strongly supported by a majority of Oregonians. While ODFW gets funding through hunting and fishing licenses to conserve game species, this funding is strictly limited on its use and there is no reliable equivalent to support the species and habitats that are most at risk. This funding would not only help wildlife and habitats, but also support local communities and businesses that rely on tourism dollars. Oregon's robust outdoor tourism economy supports nearly 200,000 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.

With nature being the primary driver behind tourism in our state, it only makes sense that we protect it! 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.

Please do the right thing and support "1.25% for Wildlife" by passing HB 4134 today!

Emma