

March 1, 2026

Dear Chair Broadman, Vice-Chair McLane, and Members of the Committee on Finance and Revenue,

My name is Lise Grato, and I am a retired resident of Albany, Linn County, Oregon. I appreciate the opportunity to share my opposition to HB 4148-A.

I have been involved in Oregon's tourism industry in many ways for over 25 years. Starting in 1998, I led the marketing initiatives for both the Visit Corvallis and the Salem Convention & Visitors Association visitor guides. For over 20 years, I volunteered with my husband at events across the mid-valley. In Corvallis, we gave our time to the Red, White & Brews Riverfront Festival, Da Vinci Days, and the Shrewsbury Renaissance Faire. In Albany, we volunteered at River Rhythms, the NW Art & Air Festival, and Movies at Monteith. In 2013, we were awarded the Oregon Festival and Events Ovation Award for our volunteerism. More recently, I have been involved with Oregon Main Streets — popular destinations for visitors and locals. All that said, you can tell my heart is in Oregon tourism.

I oppose HB 4148-A because this bill is flawed, confusing, and has a shortsighted view of Oregon's long-term economic health. In particular, the amendment adding resiliency grants was added in the last few minutes without discussion or agreement.

Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) should continue to be used to strongly fund tourism promotion, including destination management organizations (DMOs), like our local Albany Visitors Association and Visit Corvallis. This funding spreads the word about our amazing tourism opportunities to potential visitors.

When you consider what the local DMOs do, think marketing for local wineries, Mary's Peak, and Osborn Aquatic Center (where my daughter learned to swim and competed in statewide championships), drawing tourists to historic sites like Thompson's Mills, covered bridges, and downtown architecture, and activities that bring visitors to our local area and businesses like the Willamette Water Trail and the Willamette Valley Food Trails. All these are promoted by local visitor associations, with limited or no attention at the state level. This is exactly what TLT is intended for — DMOs spreading the word about what makes each area unique and drawing visitors to cities and towns across the state.

The tourism industry remains firmly committed to working as stewards of Oregon's future. Potential changes to the TLT statute should be developed in partnership with the industry most directly affected by this tax. Attractions and lodging partners should be involved in the conversation!

The local and regional TLT distributions established in 2003 should be honored and protected. If changes to TLT distributions are needed, they should only be considered for new or future TLT increases, not retroactively altering previous agreements.

Tourism is a major economic driver for Oregon, employing more than 125,000 residents statewide. We are in a challenging political and economic climate, and it is essential that we do not divert TLT revenue away from the very foundation that was originally established to support Oregon's economic recovery.

Since 2003, tourism has been essential in sustaining Oregon's workforce, economic viability, and quality of life for residents. Visitor spending in Oregon has more than doubled, from \$6.5 billion in 2003 to \$14.3 billion today. State and local transient lodging tax revenues have more than tripled, rising from \$200 million in 2003 to \$691 million today. Oregon has also experienced steady annual increases in spending, with all growth outpacing inflation.

Reducing or eliminating the momentum created by tourism investments would be detrimental to Oregon's long-term economic health. Opposing HB 4148-A is essential to ensure that tourism remains viable. Defeat HB 4148-A and help us continue to strategically plan and invest in projects and partnerships that are vital to local residents, the visitor experience, and Oregon's economic future.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

Lise Grato  
Resident  
Albany, Oregon