



Corvallis
Chamber
of Commerce

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 of the Corvallis Chamber of Commerce. I appreciate the opportunity to convey my opposition to HB 4148.

The Corvallis Chamber of Commerce represents businesses across hospitality, retail, food service, professional services, and nonprofits. Our work centers on supporting a strong, resilient local economy and ensuring that Corvallis remains competitive for visitors, conferences, university-related travel, sporting events, and regional tourism.

While House Bill 4148 may not immediately change how the lodging tax is used across communities, it raises serious concerns about regional impacts, long-term stability, and decision-making without adequate data. Shifting dollars dedicated to tourism to general funds is problematic for several key reasons.

Tourism is a regional system, not a city-by-city issue. Lodging taxes support a connected tourism economy, not isolated communities. When one community reduces its ability to promote tourism, meetings, events, and group travel decline. Hotel demand drops across the region, and neighboring communities experience fewer bookings and less economic activity. For example, large events in Eugene often create hotel bookings in Corvallis, and we regularly host overnight stays from travelers moving between the coast and Central Oregon. Even if a city's own tax structure remains unchanged, it can still be harmed by reduced regional demand. Weakening tourism promotion in one community affects surrounding communities that rely on shared visitation and travel patterns.

Major policy changes are being proposed without basic spending data. There is currently no comprehensive, standardized record of how local lodging tax revenues are spent statewide, how much goes to tourism versus local services, or what measurable outcomes those investments produce. HB 4148 proposes broad flexibility before establishing a clear baseline. Before changing the rules, the state should collect and publish transparent, comparable data on how lodging tax revenues are currently used so that decisions are grounded in facts rather than assumptions.

Lodging taxes work only when tourism is supported. Lodging taxes are paid by visitors. Visitors come because destinations invest in promotion, marketing, infrastructure, and the overall visitor experience. Reducing that investment risks shrinking the very tax base that communities depend on. You cannot sustainably collect tourism revenue while steadily reducing investment in tourism.

The local economic impact of tourism is significant. According to *The Economic Impact of Travel in Oregon – 2024p*, prepared by Dean Runyan Associates, Benton County experienced \$163.5 million in visitor spending, supported 1,950 local jobs, welcomed 750,590 visitors, and generated \$9.4 million in local and state tax revenue. Tourism organizations also contribute through community partnerships and event support that strengthen the broader economic ecosystem.

At a time when economic resilience is a top concern for Oregon communities, we respectfully urge you to oppose HB 4148, protect the tourism funding structure that Oregon communities rely on, and support policies that strengthen — not undermine — Oregon’s economic vitality.

Thank you for your time, your leadership, and your service to our state.

Sincerely,

Tracy Meese

CEO / President

Corvallis Chamber of Commerce