



VISIT CENTRAL OREGON
ADVENTURE CALLS

January 30, 2020

Representative Nathanson, Chair
House Committee on Revenue
900 Court St., NE
Salem, OR 97301

Re: HB 4047 Support, State Transient Lodging Tax

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Marsh, Vice Chair Reschke and members of the House Revenue Committee:

On behalf of Oregon's tourism industry, I am writing to ask for your support of HB 4047 which would lift the sunset on the state transient lodging tax (TLT) and maintain the current level of investment in Oregon's tourism industry.

The TLT was established in 2003 to create a dedicated funding source to promote tourism and economic development in the hospitality industry in Oregon. In 2016 the tax was adjusted to 1.8% with a sunset to 1.5% in July 2020.

As you may know, 30% of the TLT funds are dollars that are leveraged to bolster the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP) and Competitive Grants Programs led by Travel Oregon.

These programs support local communities throughout the state: helping them develop their destination, conceiving new tourism assets, expanding the visitor industry and improving local livability for residents and those who visit.

As the CEO for Visit Central Oregon, one of the seven Regional Destination Marketing Organizations (RDMOs), I am urging you to lift the sunset and maintain the statewide TLT at 1.8%. The success of the programs administered by Travel Oregon through revenue generated from this tax have been critical to our region's success in growing jobs and increased economic activity for our community.

In Central Oregon the state program has supported our ability to grant over \$240,000 to local community partners including the High Desert Museum, Sunriver Nature Central, and Discover Your Forest. Local partners have been able to leverage these funds to invest in expanded exhibits, capital campaigns, and more. Travel Oregon grant funding has helped enhance and promote tourism efforts including dollars to the Warm Springs Community Action Team to relocate the hundred-year-old Old Commissary building in Warm Springs to a strategic site near Highway 26. These projects will draw additional visitors to our local communities, boosting our local economies as well as enhancing local attractions for community members.



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Without the current state TLT 1.8% rate, these kinds of grant projects and regional funding will be cut and programs that leverage these state dollars will be scaled back.

These investments both supported our region as a destination for visitors inside and outside the state, providing added value to the quality of life for the residents of our community. These investments would not have been possible without the state support through the TLT. I would be happy to share more details on how our community benefits directly from the TLT and answer any questions you may have as you consider this important legislation.

Again, we urge your support of HB 4047 to keep the current statewide lodging tax rate at 1.8%, a decision that will ultimately support continued economic growth and development in every region of Oregon. Please don't hesitate to contact me if I can be of further assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Julia Theisen', written in a cursive style.

Julia Theisen
President and CEO
Visit Central Oregon