



February 4, 2020
Oregon Destination Association
HB 4047 Testimony to the House Revenue Committee

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

My name is Alana Hughson and I am the Managing Director of the Oregon Destination Association (ODA) and I appreciate the opportunity to convey our support for HB 4047. Having previously served as the president and CEO of the Central Oregon Visitors Association for more than two decades, it is a privilege to now work with tourism Destination Marketing and Management Organizations (DMMO's) representing the local visitor bureaus, regional visitor associations and chambers of commerce from across the entire state of Oregon.

When HB 4146 was passed in 2016, it increased the state lodging tax to 1.8%, and mandated that 30% of statewide lodging tax revenue be dedicated to community investments through local competitive grant programs, or the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP). This critical grassroots funding directs resources to the local level, which is then leveraged by the DMMOs in their local economies through an array of arts and culture programming, outdoor recreation infrastructure, sustainable tourism projects, events, and economic development initiatives.

It is this successful collaboration with Travel Oregon that is helping to generate economic activity and new jobs, in even the most rural parts of Oregon. DMMO's focus their tourism development programs on non-peak seasons because they know the importance of leveling the seasonality of tourism to create year-round job security and stability in their communities.

The leveraged RCTP partnerships are numerous and span all seven tourism regions. I'll share just a few project samples with you to showcase what the regional and local DMMO's have been able to advance for Oregon because of this statewide program collaboration:

- In Central Oregon, funds were leveraged with local tourism resources creating a Commercial Air Service Development and Marketing Fund. This led to the match necessary to apply for and secure a federal Small Community Air Service Development Program (SCASDP) grant, which expanded commercial air service. – Central Oregon further leveraged their investment with more than \$220,000 in grant funding to community non-profits for arts, culture, and sustainable outdoor recreation initiatives.
- The Portland region encompasses the cities of Portland and Gresham, the urban areas of Clackamas County and the entirety of Washington and Columbia counties. Partnership investments have supported convention sales through Portland's Visitor Development Fund (VDF) and transformative local development projects, including preservation of the Willamette Falls Locks; Salmonberry Trail trailhead improvements; facility improvements at the Mt. Hood Community College Aquatic Center and bicycle tourism infrastructure along the Banks-Vernonia Trail.

- In Southern Oregon the RCTP investment provided for mountain bike trails and events, including the Mountain of the Rogue Trail System, the Ashland Watershed Trail Alliance and the Great Umpqua NutCracker Race on the North Umpqua Trail. Investment in these systems draws visitors to the region for outdoor experiences and provides locals with expanded recreational opportunities.

There are countless programs and stories from all seven regions, as they have been galvanized by the state lodging tax investment to create sustainable marketing and product development programs. These opportunities are particularly vital to Oregon's rural communities as they continue to transition from resource-based economies to economies that include tourism marketing and management. We cannot afford to reduce or cease this momentum so critical to our rural partners.

Your support for HB 4047 will allow tourism regions and their DMMO's to plan for strategic investments, and to continue important projects and partnerships already underway. Thank you for helping your tourism partners to remain stewards of Oregon's natural wonders. We will continue our work to support local communities and improve livability for all residents of our amazing state.

Thank you for the privilege to speak with you today.

Alana Hughson
Managing Director
Oregon Destination Association