



March 2, 2020

Oregon Destination Association

HB 4047 Testimony to the Senate Committee on Finance and Revenue

Dear Chair Hass, Vice-Chair Findley, Senator Knopp, Senator Riley and Senator Taylor:

My name is Alana Hughson and I am the Managing Director of the Oregon Destination Association (ODA). ODA is the association representing the unified voice of Oregon's Destination Marketing and Management Organizations (DMOs) and we appreciate the opportunity to convey our strong and unified 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 now my privilege to work with Oregon's regional and local visitor associations, large and small, from across the state.

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 and the Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP). This critical grassroots funding directs resources to the local level, which is then leveraged by the DMOs 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. DMO's focus their tourism development on non-peak seasons because we know the importance of leveling the seasonality of tourism to create year-round job security and stability.

The leveraged RCTP partnership programs are extensive and span all seven tourism regions. Individual DMO testimony in support for HB 4047 has been submitted, so I'll share just a few project samples with you to showcase what the regional and local DMOs have been able to advance for Oregon because of statewide collaboration:

- In Central Oregon, funds were leveraged with local tourism resources to create 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 to the region. – 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. In addition, Travel Oregon worked with local partners to host the Klamath Basin Rural Tourism Studio in 2017. This program resulted in the Klamath Basin landing page, bicycle maps, and tourism-related product. To address the need for shoulder-season visitor experiences, Travel Oregon is working in partnership with Discover Klamath to develop content and structure for a stakeholder workshop this spring.

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. Like you, we will continue our work to support local communities and improve livability for all Oregon residents.

Thank you for the privilege to submit our support for HB 4047.

Alana Hughson, Managing Director
Oregon Destination Association