

Submitter: Dan Gibson  
On Behalf Of: Visit McMinnville  
Committee: House Committee On Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2977

Bill Number and Committee: HB 2977 – Testimony to the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water

Dear Chair Helm, Chair Owens, Vice-Chair McDonald, and members of the House Committee on Agriculture, Land Use, Natural Resources, and Water,

My name is Dan Gibson, and I am the CEO of Visit McMinnville, the destination marketing organization (DMO) representing tourism for McMinnville and the surrounding area. I appreciate the opportunity to express our strong opposition to HB 2977.

I understand the complexities surrounding tourism's impact, particularly on our natural resources. I also recognize the vital role tourism plays in McMinnville's economy, supporting numerous local businesses and jobs. McMinnville, with its unique blend of wine country charm and outdoor recreation opportunities, relies on a balanced approach to tourism that benefits both our residents and visitors.

At Visit McMinnville, we are deeply committed to responsible tourism practices. We work diligently to support our local businesses, including wineries, restaurants, and lodging establishments, while also preserving the natural beauty that makes our region so special. We understand that our success depends on the health and sustainability of our environment.

Collaboration is key to our success. We partner closely with local businesses, community organizations, and Travel Oregon to develop and implement programs that promote sustainable tourism and enhance the visitor experience. We focus our efforts on initiatives that protect our natural resources, support local businesses, and enhance the quality of life for our residents. This includes promoting responsible visitation, supporting local events, and investing in infrastructure that benefits both residents and visitors.

The current funding structure, with the statewide transient lodging tax, has been instrumental in supporting our efforts and the growth of responsible tourism across Oregon. It allows us to invest in vital projects that benefit our community and protect our natural resources.

While we appreciate the desire for increased funding, we believe that HB 2977 poses

a significant threat to our ability to continue this important work. Increasing the lodging tax would negatively impact McMinnville's competitiveness as a destination. Visitors, particularly those traveling on a budget, are increasingly price-sensitive. This tax increase could likely discourage travel to our region, harming local businesses and potentially reducing overall tax revenue.

The current transient lodging tax structure has proven effective in generating revenue and supporting tourism initiatives across the state. In McMinnville, these funds have been essential in supporting our hospitality industry, who are facing a wide variety of economic pressures while also operating in an increasingly competitive tourism market.

We believe that increasing the lodging tax is a counterproductive approach and risks harming the very industry it seeks to support. Instead, we should focus on strategies that promote sustainable tourism growth and ensure that our communities continue to thrive.

We urge the committee to reject HB 2977. Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. We are committed to working with you to find solutions that support responsible tourism and protect Oregon's natural treasures.

Sincerely,  
Dan Gibson  
CEO, Visit McMinnville