



Date: March 5, 2025

Name: Mackenzie Ballard

Bill Number and Committee: [HB 2171](#) – Testimony to the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business and Trade

Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chair Diehl, Vice Chair Isadore, and members of the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business and Trade.

My name is Mackenzie Ballard, and I am the Managing Director for the Oregon Destination Association (ODA). ODA has been the unified industry voice for Oregon's Destination Management Organizations (DMOs) and regional tourism industry organizations for more than three decades. ODA's membership consists of nearly 100 DMOs representing all seven tourism regions in Oregon. Our DMO members represent every community in Oregon, from rural to urban, coast to the mountains to the high desert; and operate with annual budgets of less than \$100,000 to more than \$35 million.

On behalf of our diverse statewide membership, I appreciate the opportunity to convey **our opposition to HB 2171**. The bill proposes to exempt certain fairgrounds' campsites from the state Transient Lodging Tax (TLT). This would decrease the fairgrounds and local tourism organizations' abilities to reinvest in their facilities, events, and the broader community.

TLT revenue plays a crucial role in sustaining and enhancing fairgrounds as event hubs that attract visitors, support small businesses, and generate significant economic benefits. In communities across Oregon, these funds have enabled crucial work to be done, including:

- **Infrastructure and Facility Improvements:**
 - Benton County adopted a 3% county-wide TLT in 2019. The 70% for tourism is [intended to be used](#) for enhancements at the fairgrounds.
 - In partnership with the industry, Deschutes County passed a 1% increase to the County TLT in 2013. 70% is [directed toward fairground improvements](#).
 - Travel Oregon has funded studies and improvements at county fairgrounds, supporting event attraction, infrastructure upgrades, and

visitor experience. Grants helped enhance feasibility, wayfinding, and safety measures to boost fairground usability and drive tourism.

- **Event Development & Promotion:**

- Travel Oregon has prioritized promoting **Heritage Traditions**, recognizing long-standing events across the state. This effort includes featuring select events in its visitor guide and highlighting key venues through dedicated marketing initiatives. Additionally, Travel Oregon continues to support and promote rodeos held at county fairgrounds and has previously showcased Oregon's rodeo culture at national events.

- **Tourism Growth & Economic Stability:**

- By investing in events, venues, and visitor experiences, TLT revenues help sustain jobs, boost local businesses, and ensure fairgrounds remain viable gathering spaces.

Exempting certain fairgrounds' campsites from TLT would diminish the ability for destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and fairgrounds to invest in Oregon's visitor economy. HB 2171 would take away critical funding at a time when communities need it the most.

We're asking you to oppose HB 2171 to keep TLT working to its highest return on investment for Oregon—supporting tourism, local businesses, and community projects. Saying no to this exemption helps keep Oregon's destinations strong and ensures fairgrounds continue to be important cultural and economic hubs.

Thanks for standing up for your tourism community. We'll keep working to support thriving local economies and great places to live for all Oregonians.

Sincerely,



Mackenzie Ballard
Managing Director
Oregon Destination Association