



Date: March 5, 2025

Name: Scott Larson, President & CEO, Visit Central Oregon

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 Scott Larson, and I am the President & CEO of Visit Central Oregon. Our organization is a committed partner to Deschutes County Fairgrounds, working collaboratively to support, market, and promote events that drive economic activity and community engagement. 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. As the Regional Destination Marketing Organization (RDMO), Visit Central Oregon supports and promotes events at fairgrounds in Deschutes County, Jefferson County and Crook County. Our DMO partners collaborate with their local fairgrounds to promote events as well.

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 many communities, including Central Oregon, these funds have enabled:

- **Infrastructure and Facility Improvements:** Deschutes County passed a 1% increase to their unincorporated TLT in 2013. All of the 70% for tourism in that 1% is [directed toward Fair & Expo Center marketing purposes](#).
- **Event Development & Promotion:** Lodging taxes generated by major events at the Fairgrounds, such as FairWell Festival and others, receive direct marketing support from those same TLT revenues, directly benefitting the Fairgrounds.
- **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 for visitors as well as their local residents.



Exempting fairgrounds' campsites from TLT limits the ability of destination marketing organizations (DMOs) and fairgrounds to plan for strategic investments that strengthen Oregon's visitor economy. HB 2171 would diminish crucial funding at a time when communities are relying on reinvestment the most.

We urge you to oppose HB 2171 to protect the integrity of TLT as a proven mechanism for reinvesting in tourism, community assets, and local economic vitality. By rejecting this exemption, you help sustain the long-term success of Oregon's destinations, ensuring fairgrounds continue to thrive as essential cultural and economic drivers.

Thank you for helping your tourism constituency. We will continue to support vibrant local communities fueled by tourism to improve livability for all residents of Oregon.

Sincerely,

Scott Larson
President & CEO
Visit Central Oregon