



Warren Buffers Living Services

Name: Jeffery Fox / President Warren Buffers Living Services

Reference: *Bill Number and Committee: HB 3556 – Testimony to the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans*

Dear Chair Tran, Vice Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Lewis, and members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans.

My name is Jeff Fox, and my wife and I own and operate a farm and ranch in rural Central Oregon (Prineville) in addition to other operations uniquely tethered to tourism support in our region. I am President of Warren Buffers Living Services LLC (Warren Buffers), a multi-faceted service company in Central Oregon. Warren Buffers owns and operates DarkSky™ (a tourism focused service crossing Oregon Astro-Tourism with Agri-Tourism by providing an educational and experiential mobile observatory program into remote areas for event viewing of Oregon's famed dark skies). Our media arm, (Wild Critter Media) develops destination travel directory service software, which is focused on driving visitors to our region and into welcoming business locations that are not normally associated as destination stopping points, thereby spreading the economic flow of tourism dollars beyond the normal spending channels.

As past President of Central Oregon's High Desert Food and Farm Alliance, I was on the task force working directly with Travel Oregon and Visit Central Oregon to develop the High Desert Food Trail initiative as a promotion of Agri-tourism in the region. I experienced firsthand the extending reach that program has had, as a direct result to our farm, hosting visitors from various European countries and domestic states, some of which we personally have relations with today.

As past President of the Crook County Prineville Chamber of Commerce a DMO, our board worked to help establish a secondary arm for the chamber to further reinvest TRT dollars from the city and county allocation, back into destination tourism marketing and events in the area.

I am finishing my third year as a Visit Central Oregon's Future Fund Grant program review team member, and can assure you that a positive, balanced allocation of over \$1.8 million dollars back into the region by awarded recipients has bolstered a commitment to spread tourism activity year-round. Many with focused initiatives of being proactive, accessible friendly and tourist ready communities.

While statistics lag slightly, we do know that in 2023, \$1.3 billion was registered in visitor spending. Tourism helped create 10,650 jobs and this year it nears or surpasses 11,000 which my voice is just one of. It generated nearly \$63 million in tax revenue with \$27 million staying local and nearly \$36 million to

the state of Oregon. Annually, of the \$71 million paid in property taxes by regional Destination Resorts to Central Oregon counties, they directly offset the tax burdens of full-time residents.

In farm language, stopping or altering the flow of a precious service commodity can create drought. A drought, as we know, is not an easy rebound, and the long-term effect can be felt for years. Let's not create a drought in an industry whose waterline we've worked so hard to fill since 2003.

Your opposition to HB3556 will allow your constituents and businesses in our region to consistently plan for strategic investments, and to continue the work on foundational projects, partnerships vital to Oregon's prosperity.

Thank you for helping your tourism constituency remain honored stewards of Oregon's incredible offerings. We will continue our work with communities to improve livability for all residents of Oregon.

Thank you for the privilege to speak and submit my testimony for your consideration.

Jeff Fox

SunLife Farm and Ranch
Warren Buffers Living Services LLC