

March 18, 2025

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

To Chair Tran, Vice-Chair Grayber, Vice-Chair Lewis, and Members of the House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans:

My name is Conner McLain and I am the Manager of Springhill Cellars Winery in Albany Oregon. My family's winery has served Albany for over 40 years in offering a travel destination, and wine in the Willamette Valley. I appreciate the opportunity to express our opposition to HB 3556.

Tourists are an essential part of our customer base. We don't consider them a burden, and in fact our family also operates short-term rental properties reliant on visitors for our success. The Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) in Albany was created to reinvest in tourism. Visitors to Albany help support our local businesses, restaurants and events. HB 3556 would divert these vital tourism funds to unrelated public services, all while tourism already generates millions in tax revenue that helps fund infrastructure, emergency services, and other community needs.

This change would especially impact our community. A smaller marketing budget means fewer resources to attract events, promote destinations, and support local businesses. When market conditions change, the effects can be devastating as demonstrated when the smoke from wildfires impacted the grape harvests in the Valley. I have observed, and I am positive, that a well-funded tourism program is vital to our livelihood and to the success of our local businesses.

Furthermore, tourism-related businesses like our winery and short-term rentals, hotels, restaurants, and attractions are not just contributors to TLT; we also pay property taxes, licensing fees, and other local fees and taxes that directly support our city and county services. We need a strong tourism economy, without it we suffer, and municipalities lose critical tax revenue. Redistributing funding from our industry does not just harm tourism, it harms the entire local economy.

I urge you with the very fiber of my being, please protect ours, and other local small businesses, by opposing HB 3556 and protect the TLT as a vital tool for economic growth. Tourism does so much more than just draw visitors; it plays a crucial role in sustaining local economies, supporting small businesses, and preserving cultural heritage, all of which help strengthen and sustain communities.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
Conner McLain, Springhill Cellars Winery