

Submitter:

Steven Hickman

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB3962

As a resident of Newport, a tourist-impacted city, and a City Councilor as well, I would like to share my perspective with the committee regarding my support of the bill and the flexible use of the Transient Lodging Tax. In a state as diverse as Oregon, where the needs of local governments and citizens vary considerably, I see it as wise that the state consider giving cities wide latitude in the use of funds derived from visitors based on local needs. This bill allows cities to make crucial decisions about how best to support and encourage tourism and balance the local needs and impact of that tourism appropriately.

The voters of Oregon have repeatedly expressed support for giving cities this kind of flexibility in allocation of TLT funds, especially those in cities like ours where the impact of tourism is felt in so many ways that residents need to live with year-round after tourists have left. Eroded streets and trails, wear and tear on tourism facilities, accumulated trash, and abandoned vehicles are the most obvious impact of tourism, but also the reliance on public safety services when tourists are present also puts a huge strain on city budgets. Cities like ours welcome tourists, but we want them to be happy and satisfied with the facilities and services they find when they get here and even our tourist-oriented local businesses would like these folks to have a positive experience when they come to town.

This bill preserves the right for cities to make clear determinations about how much they spend on outright promotion of tourism versus attending to the impact of those who visit, to find just the right balance for their local needs, rather than imposing an artificial limit and restrictions on these funds. Giving cities this power to allocate funds generated locally is in the spirit of individual freedom and flexibility that our country and state are founded upon.

I strongly urge passage of this bill for the good of the state of Oregon and all its cities.