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May 7th 2025

House Committee on Revenue
Oregon State Capitol
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Local Lodging Tax Flexibility

Dear Chair Nathanson and Members of the Committee,

The City of Winston supports HB 3962-2. HB 3962-2 adds “tourism-impacted services” as an allowable use in the restricted 70% portion of local lodging tax funds. These services include public safety (fire, EMS, and police) and community infrastructure (water, wastewater, transportation, parks, trails and public amenities). Local lodging taxes are taxes paid by visitors of hotels, motels, short term rentals and campgrounds. In 2003, the state passed a preemption on local transient lodging taxes that established restrictions around how local lodging tax dollars could be spent, requiring at least 70% of new or increased taxes to go toward tourism promotion and tourism-related facilities and reserving the remaining 30% for local discretionary spending.

Under current court interpretations, existing definitions of tourism promotion and tourism-related facilities only leave local jurisdictions so much leeway to respond to the strains of tourism. Right now, communities bear the burden of maintaining and operating things that directly benefit tourists that are primarily funded by and for community members, like public safety, and community infrastructure. The city of Winston is facing numerous challenges directly related to tourism activity. The primary tourism destination is the Wildlife Safari with approximately 350,000 visitors each year. The additional stress on the infrastructure with the lack of additional hotel/motel operations has caused the city to defer a significant amount of maintenance. Its imperative this funding source is opened to cover a more comprehensive portion of deficiencies directly associated with tourism activities.

We urge your support of HB 3962-2!

Respectfully,

Thomas McIntosh
City Manager,
City of Winston