

Submitter:

Kyle Collins

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2977

Dear committee members,

I am writing today to ask that you support HB 2977. As I'm sure you are aware, HB 2977 would provide a 1% increases to our statewide transient lodging tax for wildlife populations statewide so that we can ensure sustainable funding for conservation and recovery of our imperiled wildlife and fish species and their habitats. Given that wildlife and the natural habitats they depend on is one of the main driver's our tourism to Oregon, it feels quite sensible to me to tie this nominal tax increase directly towards those uses which increase pressures on wildlife populations in a number of ways.

As a resident of Central Oregon, I can tell you that our natural spaces and wildlife populations are one of our our most vital economic resources, as hundreds of thousands of travelers specifically visit this region for outdoor recreation in our irreplaceable open spaces and public lands. Additionally, people travel here directly to engage with wildlife, whether through trout fishing in the Metolius, Crooked, and Deschutes Rivers, or through more hands-off activities like birdwatching and wildlife photography in the Cascades Mountains and high desert lands. Unfortunately, as these places see increasing visitors and uses, all too often wildlife population suffer through habitat degradation, vehicle strikes, and general displacement of sensitive species in protected areas. If we want to maintain these valuable resources into the future, we must begin to maintain them in a long-term manner with well funded scientific studies, restoration projects, and education campaigns. As a new parent, I want to share wildlife experiences that I have had throughout our state with my son, but I fear those opportunities may be harder to come in the future without more committed action and resources.

The Oregon Department of Fish and Wildlife (ODFW) has identified nearly 300 species at elevated risk of extinction in 11 habitats of conservation concern. While Oregon has done incredible work for decades to help our wildlife, unfortunately the scale of the financial need far exceeds what is currently directed towards research, public education, habitat restoration, and a variety of other activities to support wildlife. Without additional funding, Oregon is likely to continue seeing decreased health and numbers across a range of species, including mule deer, salmon and trout, song birds, and less charismatic animals that often go under the radar. Recovery of a species which is still on the landscape in an appreciable way is a much more cost effective, and generally effective, approach to wildlife conservation and these species deserve our commitment. Without adequate, reliable and sustained

funding, ODFW is often unable to effectively implement our State Wildlife Action Plan, which represents our best understand of how to recover our state's most precious heritage.

HB 2977 will provide a reliable, sustained, long-term funding source, which is not vulnerable to the general fund allocation process. Please support this common-sense approach to ensuring ODFW has the funds it needs to conserve and recover Oregon's wildlife for us and for our future generations.