

Submitter:

Leslie Kettenhofen

On Behalf Of:

Committee:

House Committee On Revenue

Measure, Appointment or Topic:

HB2977

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

RE: Oppose HB 2977 – Protect Local Tourism Funding in Florence

Dear Chair Nathanson, Co-Chairs Reschke and Walters, and Members of the Committee:

As a resident and business owner in the Florence community, I am writing to voice strong opposition to HB 2977, which proposes increasing the state's lodging tax rate. For small, tourism-reliant towns like Florence, this bill poses a serious threat to our local economy. Our thriving vacation rental business took a major hit in the 4th quarter of 2024, and it has progressively worsened in 2025. Most of my homeowners have had no income in the first 4 months of this year. Which means the cleaners, plumbers and other contractors that also might be working on these homes haven't had any work either.

Florence depends on tourism—not just for seasonal visitors, but for sustaining small businesses, creating jobs, and funding essential community assets like the Florence Events Center, which was built using transient lodging tax (TLT) funds. Increasing the state lodging tax risks driving visitors elsewhere, and stopping our nearby visitors from traveling to spend the weekend. This undermines local efforts to maintain and grow our year-round economy.

The current TLT structure already supports strategic, high-impact tourism marketing and infrastructure investments in rural areas. Raising the rate may reduce travel demand, increase lodging costs, and harm the small business owners like myself that help fund critical services in our community.

We urge you to protect rural communities like ours that rely on tourism to survive and thrive. Please oppose HB 2977 and preserve the integrity of Oregon's tourism economy.

Sincerely,

Leslie Kettenhofen - Owner
Whales Watch Vacation Rentals

Florence, Oregon 97439