



June 23, 2025

Subject: Opposition to HB 2977A

Dear Co-Chairs Helm, Owens, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Tori Middelstadt, and I serve as the Executive Director of the Willamette Valley Visitors Association. I am writing to respectfully express my **strong opposition to HB 2977A**, which proposes allocating Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) revenues to fund fish, wildlife, and habitat conservation efforts.

While I fully support protecting Oregon's natural resources, it is neither appropriate nor equitable to place the financial burden of these efforts on visitors through the statewide lodging tax. The TLT was established to support tourism promotion and development, which directly drives local economic activity. Diverting these funds further away from their intended use undermines tourism's positive impact on our communities.

Destination marketing organizations work closely with local businesses, community groups, and Travel Oregon to promote sustainable tourism, support local events, and invest in infrastructure that benefits both residents and visitors. Our efforts already contribute to the stewardship of Oregon's natural assets and the enhancement of quality of life.

Currently, much of the TLT collected by local governments is already directed to non-tourism-related uses. Shifting even more funds away from tourism weakens our ability to attract visitors, support local jobs, and generate economic returns across the state.

The tourism industry is a critical driver of Oregon's economy—through leisure travel, business events, and talent attraction. Visitors should not be expected to bear the cost of conservation programs that benefit all Oregonians. Allowing this tax expansion sets a troubling precedent that opens the door for additional, incremental tax increases by other sectors. While a 1.25% increase may seem small, many visitors already pay lodging taxes exceeding 10% per stay. This additional cost could deter event planners, meetings, and sports tournaments—especially when profit margins are tight and competitive alternatives exist.

I urge you to vote NO on HB 2977A to protect the original intent of the Transient Lodging Tax and the economic vitality of Oregon's tourism industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Tori Middelstadt
Executive Director
Willamette Valley Visitors Association