

Submitter: Courtney Gattuso
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Senate Committee On Rules
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB2977

Testimony of Courtney Gattuso
Coordinator, Western Invasives Network

Public Testimony in Support of House Bill 2977

Dear Senate,

My name is Courtney Gattuso, and I serve as the Coordinator of the Western Invasives Network, a regional noxious weed partnership that spans across western Oregon. I am here today to express my strong support for House Bill 2977.

Invasive species are one of the most serious and fast-growing threats to Oregon's landscapes, waterways, agriculture, and native species. Across the state, regional partnerships like ours work hard to prevent the spread of invasive plants, insects, and aquatic species. However, the truth is simple: there is not enough funding to keep up with the growing scale of these threats.

Early detection and rapid response is the most effective and cost-efficient way to manage invasive species. But without stable, long-term funding, our ability to act quickly is severely limited. Once invasive species become established, the costs of management multiply, and the damage to ecosystems and economies can become irreversible.

House Bill 2977 offers a rare opportunity to address this chronic funding gap. By adding a modest 1% increase to Oregon's state lodging tax, the bill would generate approximately \$32 million annually. This would include dedicated, ongoing funding for the Oregon Invasive Species Council:

- \$300,000 per biennium to support operations, education, outreach, and coordination.
- \$1 million per biennium for an emergency control fund to respond quickly when new threats emerge.

These funds would allow us to strengthen early detection efforts, support on-the-ground work, and coordinate responses before invasive species take hold and cause irreversible harm.

In addition to invasive species, HB 2977 would support a wide range of conservation

priorities, including habitat restoration, wildlife connectivity, wolf-livestock conflict reduction, anti-poaching efforts, and community engagement through recreation and stewardship programs.

This bill has strong bipartisan and stakeholder support across Oregon. The tax increase primarily affects visitors who come to experience the natural beauty that this funding will help protect.

Speaking on behalf of the many local, regional, and state partners who fight invasive species every day, I urge you to support HB 2977. This is a smart, responsible investment that will pay dividends for Oregon's ecosystems, economy, and future generations.

Thank you for your time and consideration.