

TO: Chair Jama and members of the Rules Committee

RE: Support for HB2977

I am writing to ask for your support and vote in favor of passing HB2977 from the Senate Rules Committee to the Senate Floor.

As you know, this bill has bipartisan support and recently passed the House 36-15 and addresses a long-standing problem at ODFW, a lack of general fund dollars to support Oregon's wildlife.

The bill provides funding for **ODFW's Conservation Strategy, also known as the State Wildlife Action Plan**. The Bill also funds several important programs within ODFW, including the **Wolf Compensation Fund, Invasive species** management and **anti-poaching**. Importantly, the bill also funds **the OR Conservation and Recreation Fund (OCRf)**, a relatively new program within ODFW that was created in the 2019 legislative session. OCRf funds wildlife projects, wildlife recreation projects and includes a focus on funding groups and entities that have been historically underrepresented.

Approving HB2977 will provide direct benefits to communities and organizations. And the beauty of this bill is that an estimated **65%** of all proceeds from the Transient Lodging Tax are paid for by non-Oregonians, i.e. visitors to the state. In contrast to other bills, **this is not much of a tax to Oregonians** as it's **paid for primarily by Non-Oregonians**. **This is a WIN-WIN for Oregon**.

We heard in the Public Hearing of Rules Committee various comments from Travel Oregon, Metro and Travel Portland expressing their concern about an increase of 1.25% in the Transient Lodging Tax. Currently, Portland has a self-imposed 16% Transient Lodging Tax. The argument offered by Travel Oregon, Metro and Travel Portland was disingenuous and self-serving. If those groups were truly concerned about their ability to compete and attract business to the Convention Center and other Portland venues, then Portland & Multnomah Co. would have a more moderate local transient lodging tax, say 10% rather than 16%. Their arguments were embarrassing and self-centered.

For all of Oregon, urban, rural, east, west, please help move HB2977 out of Committee and rally your Senate colleagues to support and pass HB2977.

Mark Stern

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