



February 9, 2026

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Reschke, Vice Chair Walters, and members of the House Committee on Revenue,

My name is Courtney Braun and I am a co-owner of Wanderlust Tours based in Bend, Oregon. I appreciate the opportunity to convey my opposition to HB 4148.

I have guided for Wanderlust Tours since 2011, worked as their Group Sales Coordinator since 2017 and now have co-owned since 2022. Being a part of Wanderlust Tours in several different capacities over the years has given me great insight into the importance of DMOs. Their passion that they have for our community has impacted me both as a small business owner as well as a community member. Their care for our community would fall short in impact if there were not TRT dollars to back that creativity and passion. Now sitting on the board of Visit Bend, I am able to see with great insight the thoughtfulness and research and reflection that goes into each decision and to watch their staff find amazing ways to both support tourism AND our community!

We oppose HB 4148 because this bill was not developed with the established history of broad collaboration and inclusion of statewide DMO's and our industry partners. Honoring the commitments made to the industry in the 2003 and 2016 state Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) processes was absent in bringing HB 4148 to the short session. The result is poor policy and a shortsighted view of Oregon's long term economic health.

The tourism industry remains firmly committed to working as stewards of Oregon's future. Potential changes to TLT statute should be developed in partnership with the industry most directly affected by this tax. The local and regional TLT distributions established in 2003 should be honored and protected. If changes to TLT distributions are merited, they should only be considered on new or future TLT increases, not retroactively altering sacrosanct agreements.

Tourism is a major economic driver for Oregon, providing employment for more than 125,000 residents statewide. We are in a challenging economic climate, and it is essential we do not divert transient lodging tax revenue away from the very foundation that was originally established to support Oregon's economic recovery.

DMO's are responsible and accountable tourism professionals who generate millions of dollars in positive economic impacts for communities throughout Oregon. Oregon's DMOs do not use Tourism Promotion dollars to market to visitors during peak seasons. Instead, DMOs aim to attract visitors during non-peak travel periods through programs that increase occupancy in slower visitor months and help balance visitor volume across destinations. This strategy helps to even out the seasonality of tourism, ensuring year-round employment and healthy economies for local communities.

Tourism became foundational to Oregon's economy as a result of the Tourism Investment Proposal of 2003. This initiative led to the creation of Travel Oregon, established a dedicated funding source through the statewide transient lodging tax (TLT), and protected local funding investments in tourism.

During the 2003 recession, the Governor, working closely with the legislature and tourism leaders statewide, recognized tourism as an untapped market. Strategic and sustained investment in tourism was deemed essential by all partners to build Oregon's reputation as a desirable destination for both business and leisure travel.

Collaboration was a key element in this process. Collaboration was also key in 2016, when the statewide TLT was increased to invest in Oregon's hosting of the World Track & Field Championships, further establishing Eugene, Oregon as Track Town USA. This action helped to expand regional tourism investments and competitive grant programs for local communities across the state.

Since 2003, tourism has been essential in sustaining Oregon's workforce, economic viability, and quality of life for residents. Visitor spending in Oregon has more than doubled—from \$6.5 billion in 2003 to \$14.3 billion today. State and local transient lodging tax revenues have more than tripled, rising from \$200 million in 2003 to \$691 million today. Oregon has also experienced steady annual increases in spending, with all growth outpacing inflation.

The Regional Cooperative Tourism Program (RCTP), established in 2003, has facilitated numerous partnerships statewide. These collaborations span all seven tourism regions and have led to significant projects and initiatives.

At Wanderlust Tours, we would not have been able to have as much success in several new programs without the support of our DMOs.

- AdvenTours: An incredible program increasing accessibility to central Oregon's great outdoors through a partnership with a local non-profit. A grant from Visit Central Oregon's Future Fund helped to kick start this project which has since brought folks from all over the world to central Oregon. This gave us the chance to showcase our state's accessibility and to continue the meaningful work of making sure that EVERYONE has access to the outdoors.

- Dark Sky: With the Oregon Outback recent designation, Wanderlust Tours has been able to promote additional tourism to nearby Fort Rock State Park. Without the marketing support from Visit Bend and Visit Central Oregon, our small business would not have been able to have the same high caliber marketing content and support. This tour has been able to bring folks to central Oregon despite a less than ideal snow-pack which has a positive impact to the economy of our city as well as our small business.

These examples highlight just a few of our many programs and successes. The current statute enables the creation of sustainable marketing and product development programs, which are especially critical for communities transitioning from resource-based economies to those that include tourism management and marketing.

Reducing or eliminating the momentum created by tourism investments would be detrimental to Oregon's long term economic health. Opposing HB 4148 is essential to ensure that tourism destinations and DMOs remain viable. Defeat HB 4148 and help us continue to strategically plan and invest in projects and partnerships that are vital to Oregon's economic future.

Thank you for supporting your tourism constituency as stewards of Oregon's natural wonders.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony.

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