

Submitter: Rachel Watkins
On Behalf Of:
Committee: House Committee On Revenue
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB4148
Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice-Chair Reschke, Vice-Chair Walters, and members of the House Committee on Revenue,

My name is Rachel Watkins and I'm the Director of Sales for the Phoenix Inn Suites in Albany, Oregon. I appreciate the opportunity to convey my opposition to HB 4148. The transient lodging tax was created to be a self-funded economic development tool, reinvesting visitor dollars back into the tourism industry that generates them. This model works only when the funds are used as intended. Increasingly, lodging tax revenues are being treated as a funding source for unrelated programs. Each time the split or allowable use of these funds is changed, destination marketing and management organizations lose the ability to promote Oregon at the level required to drive visitation and generate revenue and other tourism entities such as cultural heritage sites and events will lose funding. This legislative session alone includes multiple proposals to redirect lodging tax funds. These repeated attempts weaken the effectiveness of the tax and reduce its impact on visitor spending, job creation, and local economic growth. At some point, continued diversion turns the lodging tax into a general fund in practice, if not in name. When promotion is underfunded, visitation declines and the revenue base shrinks. Protecting the integrity of the lodging tax is essential to maintaining a strong and sustainable tourism economy.

Thank you for your consideration,
Rachel Watkins
Director of Sales - Phoenix Inn Suites Albany, Oregon
541-926-5696