



February 9, 2026

Senate Committee on Judiciary

Oregon State Capitol

900 Court Street NE

Salem, Oregon 97701

RE: HB 4148 Letter of Support

Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Reschke and Members of the Committee,

I am writing to you today as the Mayor of Bend to urge your passage of House Bill 4148. Increasing local lodging tax flexibility is our #1 policy priority for the short session.

Bend is a world-class destination. Our mountain trails, rivers, music venues, and vibrant small businesses attract visitors from across Oregon and around the world. Tourism is a cornerstone of our local economy, generating millions of dollars annually and supporting jobs across multiple sectors.

At the same time, the success of tourism brings growing challenges. Bend has one of the lowest permanent property tax rates in Oregon yet is among the fastest-growing cities in the state. When rapid population growth is combined with heavy tourism activity, the strain on city services and infrastructure is significant.

Visitors rely on Bend's roads, emergency services, parks, and public spaces—just as residents do. When roads deteriorate, sidewalks are missing, or emergency response times are stretched, both the visitor experience and residents' quality of life are affected.

Current state law restricts how our local lodging taxes revenues may be used. HB 4148 provides a necessary update by allowing communities greater flexibility to invest lodging tax revenues in projects that maintain a clear nexus to tourism while also benefiting residents. Even with additional flexibility, Bend remains fully committed to destination marketing and tourism promotion.

The restrictions on lodging tax use were adopted more than two decades ago under strikingly different economic conditions. Since then, cities like Bend have stepped up through utility fees, property taxes, fire levies, and major infrastructure investments, including a \$190 million transportation bond. Lodging tax revenues must be part of a modern, balanced funding approach.

HB 4148 helps align state policy with today's realities. Tourism and thriving communities go hand in hand, and this bill will help ensure Bend remains a safe, welcoming, and sustainable destination. It's not enough to simply market Oregon's destinations. We need to invest and steward them as well.

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read 'MK', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mayor Melanie Kebler, City of Bend