

Mereté

Hotel Management

February 9, 2026

Subject: Opposition to HB 4148 – Harmful Impacts on Rural Tourism Economies

Dear Chair and Members of the Committee,

I am writing on behalf of rural hotel owners and tourism-dependent communities across Oregon to express strong opposition to House Bill 4148. As COO of Mereté Hotel Management, I see firsthand how tourism impacts smaller towns and businesses. We operate 18 hotels across the state, primarily in tertiary markets, including Hermiston, Grants Pass, Roseburg, Central Point, and Springfield. We employ approximately 600-800 Oregon residents at any one time, depending on the time of year.

Rural tourism operates very differently from tourism in urban areas. In rural communities, there is no built-in demand. Hotels, restaurants, and local attractions rely heavily on destination marketing funded by Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) revenues to attract visitors and sustain local economies.

HB 4148 would significantly reduce the portion of TLT revenues dedicated to tourism promotion, allowing most of these funds to be redirected to general local services. While this may be presented as fiscal flexibility, in rural areas, it would result in fewer visitors, reduced occupancy, lost jobs, and ultimately, business closures.

TLT revenues were created as a self-reinforcing economic development tool: visitors fund tourism promotion, tourism promotion attracts visitors, and that activity generates jobs and tax revenue. Diverting these dollars away from tourism weakens this cycle and undermines long-term economic stability, particularly in rural regions with limited alternative industries.

Rural hotels already face challenges, including workforce shortages, seasonality, and rising operating costs. Reducing investment in tourism further threatens the viability of these businesses and the communities they support.

We respectfully urge the Legislature to oppose HB 4148 or amend it to preserve strong protections for tourism funding, especially in rural Oregon, where tourism is not discretionary, it is essential.

Thank you for your consideration and for recognizing the critical role tourism plays in sustaining rural communities.

Sincerely,

Liz Dahlager

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