



OREGON
DESTINATION
ASSOCIATION



February 9, 2026

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

My name is Allison Richards, and I am currently the Stakeholder & Industry Relations Manager at the Coos Bay-North Bend-Charleston Visitor & Convention Bureau. I appreciate the opportunity to convey my opposition to HB 4148.

My career in tourism extends well beyond destination marketing and reflects a lifelong commitment to the hospitality industry. I began my career in hotels and restaurants, where tourism supported me through college and provided a strong foundation as I entered the professional workforce. Over the past 35 years, this industry has offered meaningful life lessons and the opportunity to positively impact people from all walks of life through roles including server, front desk manager, wedding and events planner, and restaurant manager, among many others.

I have also had the privilege of working with and being mentored by exceptional industry leaders, as well as giving back through service on the Oregon Tour & Travel Alliance Board and my local Chamber of Commerce Board, partnering with the Oregon Arts Alliance, local non-profits, and service clubs, and helping to plan the Oregon Coast Music Festival. Collectively, these experiences have given me a broad and well-rounded perspective on the positive economic, cultural, and community impacts of tourism.

Tourism impacts the entire community financially, contributing not only to the obvious businesses but also to businesses like construction, real estate, and car dealerships, where employees of tourism businesses make major purchases.

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 to 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.

Oregon Coast:

- Pioneered the accessibility initiative that led to Oregon becoming the very first State to be recognized as Accessibility Verified. Accessibility is not just about mobility; it also includes hearing, sight, neurodivergence, and developmental disabilities. This includes work with David's Chair, Wheel The World, and the installation of accessible kayak launches, hearing loops, as well as many other programs.
- Keeping local seafood local: rather than importing 90 percent of what our restaurants are serving, we can say that fish, oyster, crab, or clam was caught this morning in our local harbors. One of the programs promoting this is the Winter Waters Culinary Events in February, which not only highlight our vast seafood bounty, but also promote travel to the coast during the off-season.

These examples highlight just a few of our many programs and successes. 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. For example, at the Coos Bay-North Bend-Charleston VCB, we were able to determine our Return on Investment at \$26.50 returned to the community for every \$1 that we spent on marketing, contributing over \$147.3 Million in visitor spending in 2024. HB 4148 could reduce our annual budget by over \$290,000, and may result in the loss of one or more staff, decreasing our ability and capacity to do the work we do, as well as having a significantly smaller amount to spend on marketing, which in turn reduces the overall return on spending to the community.

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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