



February 9, 2026

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

We are Andrea Weaver, Tourism Development Specialist for Explore Prineville and Deb Shaw, Director of Commerce & Tourism at Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce/Explore Prineville; we appreciate the opportunity to convey our opposition to HB 4148.

Explore Prineville is the go-to hub for discovering Prineville and Crook County's small-town charm, rich history, and big outdoor adventure. It highlights local trails, reservoirs, dark skies, and high-desert scenery, along with welcoming shops, eateries, and year-round community events that make this corner of Central Oregon a memorable place to visit.

We oppose HB 4148 because this bill was not developed with the established history of collaboration between the state, Oregon's DMO's, and our broader industry partners. Honoring the commitments made to the industry during the 2003 and 2016 state Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) processes was absent in bringing HB 4148 to the short session. The result is a flawed, confusing bill, 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 helping to generate millions of dollars in economic impacts for communities throughout Oregon. Oregon's DMOs do not use Tourism Promotion dollars to market to visitors during peak seasons. 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 seasonal 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.

For example, at Explore Prineville/Prineville-Crook County Chamber of Commerce, we have implemented the following programs to support our local community:

☐ **Tourism is a major economic driver in Crook County, supporting 680 local jobs in 2025 alone.**

☐ **Visitors generated \$55 million in countywide spending, directly strengthening local businesses and community services.**

☐ **Tourism growth resulted in a 5% increase in TLT revenue in 2024 and an additional 3% increase in 2025, demonstrating strong return on investment.**

☐ **Prineville serves as the gateway to Central Oregon's 4 million annual visitors, positioning the community as a critical regional entry point.**

☐ **The Prineville Visitor Center remains a key tourism asset, welcoming:**

- **878 walk-in visitors**
- **693 phone inquiries answered**
- **255 rockhounding maps and guides distributed**

☐ **Completed a Visitor Center remodel, improving visitor engagement and community resource access.**

☐ **Continued development of dark sky tourism initiatives, expanding Prineville's destination appeal.**

☐ **Strengthened inclusive and accessible tourism through a partnership with Wheel the World and the City of Prineville, introducing an accessible golf cart at the local public course — one of only two in Oregon.**

☐ **Tourism investment supports long-term workforce development, including \$2.4 million in COCC Foundation scholarships for the 2025–2026 academic year.**

☐ **TLT funding is directly supporting jobs, local business growth, accessibility, and sustainable economic development for Prineville and Crook County.**

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. 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.

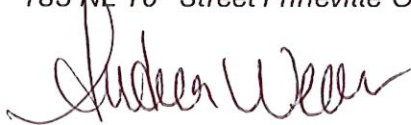


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