



**Date:** February 9, 2026

**Name:** Katharine Cato, Travel Ashland

**Bill Number and Committee:** HB 4148 testimony to the House Committee on Revenue

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

My name is Katharine Cato and I am the Director of Travel Ashland. I also serve as Treasurer of Travel Southern Oregon and Oregon Destination Association boards. I appreciate the opportunity to convey my opposition to HB 4148.

Tourism is the front door to Ashland's economy. Travel Ashland serves as the destination marketing organization, driving and amplifying Ashland's tourism industry, stakeholders and partners. Our quality of life, employment and livelihoods depend on a steady visitor volume year-round from the individual leisure traveler to groups, tours and conferences that are drawn to Ashland.

Tourism revenues are an effective economic engine however they require continued investment and now more than ever we need to retain our market share to be a competitive visitor destination as a state and educate new visitors.

The tourism industry is still recovering with lower occupancies vs. pre-pandemic. This bill will dismantle that tourism investment and create an unhealthy dependency for cities on an economic engine that needs funding to sustain not only itself but Oregon's quality of life and its positive economic impact.

Speaking from experience with one of the smallest budgets for a DMO of our size in the state, where in Ashland only 30% goes to tourism and as a DMO we only see half of that at 15%, to serve, inform, educate and welcome our visitors while promoting all of Ashland and our region. Small businesses, outfitters, restaurants, retail and lodging partners depend on us for the furthest strategic market outreach to effectively reach visitors.

While we understand the pressing demands to fund a myriad of statewide programs, Oregon cannot afford to tax its way to a sustainable economy; we must be committed to *growing* our way to a sustainable economy. Transient lodging tax is intended to be reinvested in communities to help grow local economies in support for Oregon's overall health and economic vitality.

In 2025, Travel Ashland

- Welcomed over 495,000 visitor trips that equates to 1.2 million visitor days
- Saw visitor spending in Ashland as it reached \$88.4 million for 2025, up over 2024.
- Continued to put Ashland on the map for our wine, culinary, outdoors and unmatched culture.

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 the privilege to submit this testimony in opposition.

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