



February 9th, 2026

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

On behalf of the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce, I respectfully submit this testimony in opposition to House Bill 4148.

The Wallowa County Chamber represents businesses across Wallowa County and serves as the destination marketing and management organization for our rural region. Tourism is not incidental to our economy - it is a primary driver of jobs, small business viability, and community reinvestment in a remote county with limited alternative economic engines.

HB 4148 would significantly alter Oregon's long-standing Transient Lodging Tax framework by reducing the protected share dedicated to tourism-related purposes and increasing the portion available for general government use. While this change is presented as added flexibility, for rural communities like ours it represents a destabilizing shift away from the very investments that generate lodging tax revenue in the first place.

In Wallowa County, visitor spending supports lodging operators, restaurants, outfitters, retailers, and event-based businesses that collectively sustain year-round employment and community services. Dedicated TLT funding enables destination marketing, visitor information services, shoulder-season promotion, and coordinated regional efforts that small rural jurisdictions cannot fund through general revenues alone. These investments are not discretionary - they are foundational to our community.

The current statutory structure provides predictability and accountability for long-term planning. It allows tourism partners to make multi-year investments, leverage regional and state programs, and respond strategically to changing visitation patterns. Reducing the protected tourism allocation undermines that stability and places rural destinations at a competitive disadvantage, particularly against neighboring states and regions that continue to invest aggressively in tourism infrastructure and promotion.

HB 4148 also risks creating a downward cycle: reduced tourism investment leads to reduced visitation, which in turn lowers lodging occupancy and tax collections – therefore ultimately shrinking the total revenue available for both tourism and local services. This is not a hypothetical concern; it is a pattern rural communities have seen repeatedly when marketing and destination management resources are eroded.

We recognize the fiscal pressures facing cities and counties and support thoughtful, collaborative discussions about sustainable funding solutions. However, redistributing existing Transient Lodging Tax revenues away from tourism does not create new resources – rather it weakens a proven economic development model that has delivered consistent returns for rural Oregon for more than two decades.

For these reasons, the Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce respectfully urges the Committee to oppose HB 4148.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Piper
Executive Director

Wallowa County Chamber of Commerce

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