

February 10, 2026

Dear Chair Nathanson, Vice Chair Reschke, and Members of the Committee,

I am writing today to urge passage of House Bill 4148. Our visitor economy is a major driver of economic health in our community and we are committed to continuing to grow it as part of our vision for a vibrant future.

At the same time, visitors require city services that should not, and in reality given current funding restrictions at the state level, cannot be paid by local property owners. But they are required just the same. Our visitors need police and fire protection and their presence strains our roads and park facilities.

Fortunately, here in Ashland, we instituted our first lodging tax prior to the state regulations that set the current allocations, so our local allocation is almost the exact opposite with nearly 70% able to be invested in public services. I am engaging in this policy conversation because I cannot imagine what we would do if we were in the same situation so many of our neighboring jurisdictions find themselves in – unable to provide basic services to their visitors. This difference between what we can invest in public services in Ashland and what our neighbors can invest comes out to roughly six firefighters.

Over time, failing to allow local governments to invest a greater amount of lodging tax revenue into the services that provide the foundation for their communities will only hurt tourism. People do not want to visit communities with failing services, and it will only take one major wildfire disaster where visitors are unable to be evacuated because of inadequate public services to put a fine point on the fact that while we love our visitors in Oregon, we fail to look after them properly while they are here. This failure will be due in large part to the current regulations, but you can change that with this bill.

Sincerely,



Tonya Graham
Mayor

CITY COUNCIL

20 East Main Street
Ashland, Oregon 97520
ashland.or.us
TonyaForAshland.com

Tel: 541.488.6002
Fax: 541.488.5311
TTY: 800.735.2900

tonya@council.ashland.or.us
council@ashland.or.us (email all of Council)

