



March 21, 2025

House Committee On Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Oregon State Legislature
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301

RE: Request to Move House Bill 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue Without Recommendation

Chair: Tran, Vice-Chairs: Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the Committee,

The City of Gearhart urges you to move House Bill 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue without recommendation so it can receive the thorough financial and policy discussion it deserves.

Tourism draws millions of visitors to Oregon's scenic counties and cities each year, bringing economic benefits but also placing immense strain on local services—particularly public safety. HB 3556 is critical for Gearhart and other communities affected by tourism, helping ensure we can maintain safe and sustainable communities for both residents and visitors.

Gearhart depends on tourism, yet the increasing number of visitors puts mounting pressure on emergency response systems, law enforcement, and infrastructure. HB 3556 addresses this issue by allowing local governments to allocate new or increased Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) revenues toward tourism-impacted services, including public safety.

Under ORS 320.350, the 70/30 funding structure requires that 70% of new TLT revenues go to tourism promotion and related facilities, leaving only 30% for local discretion. This outdated formula fails to reflect the real-world impact tourism has on essential services like law enforcement and emergency response.

The effects are tangible. In Clatsop County, tourism-related incidents significantly increase demand on law enforcement, fire departments, search and rescue teams, EMS, and the justice system. First responders face higher call volumes, especially during peak seasons. Eleven of the County's fire agencies rely on volunteers, who are increasingly stretched thin due to workload, limited staffing, and insufficient funding.

From 2019 to 2024, visitors accounted for roughly one-third of all jail bookings, arrests, and citations in Clatsop County, and 15% of reported crime victims. Our EMS provider responds to an

average of 382 calls per month, with summer peaks exceeding that by over 14%. Yet, without flexibility in how TLT revenues can be used, communities like ours lack the resources to keep pace with these growing demands.

HB 3556 would give local governments the necessary flexibility to invest TLT revenues where they are most needed—into services that directly support public safety and, by extension, the sustainability of tourism itself. A safe, responsive community enhances the visitor experience and reinforces Oregon's reputation as a desirable travel destination.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge you to move HB 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue without recommendation, allowing for a full and informed discussion on how best to support communities impacted by tourism.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "P. Devereaux".

Preston Devereaux, Gearhart City Councilor
City of Gearhart