



CLATSOP COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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March 20, 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

Chairman, Vice-Chairs Grayber and Lewis, and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Clatsop County Sheriff's Office, I urge 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 public safety services. Law enforcement agencies, in particular, experience increased demands as visitor numbers rise, requiring additional resources to ensure the safety of both residents and tourists. HB 3556 is critical for Clatsop County and other communities affected by tourism, ensuring that we can maintain safe and sustainable communities for both residents and visitors. Moving this bill to the House Committee on Revenue will ensure that the financial implications and necessary policy adjustments are fully examined, allowing stakeholders to engage in a meaningful discussion about how to best support tourism-impacted communities.

The rising number of visitors directly impacts law enforcement agencies. Tourism-related incidents lead to increased calls for service, higher arrest rates, more traffic-related accidents, and additional strain on jail capacity and court systems. However, despite these increasing demands, current law restricts how local governments can use new or increased Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) revenue, prioritizing tourism promotion and facilities over essential public safety services.

ORS 300.350 requires that 70% of all new local TLT rates and increases established after June 30, 2003 be dedicated to tourism promotion and tourism-related facilities, leaving only 30% available for discretionary use. This allocation does not account for the direct public safety impacts of

MATTHEW D. PHILLIPS, SHERIFF

tourism, leaving law enforcement agencies without the necessary funding to respond to the influx of visitors and associated safety concerns effectively.

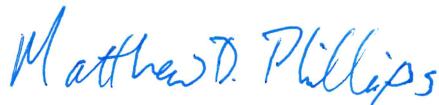
The effects are tangible and the data in Clatsop County demonstrates these impacts clearly. Between 2019 and 2024, visitors accounted for roughly one-third of all jail bookings, arrests, and tickets, as well as 15% of crime victims. Additionally, our emergency medical services provider for the County responded to an average of 382 calls per month, with peak months exceeding that average by more than 14%. In rural areas, volunteer-staffed fire agencies face significant challenges due to heavy workloads, insufficient funding, and limited staff. In Clatsop County, this includes 11 fire agencies that rely on volunteers in order to provide year-round services. Without the flexibility to allocate TLT revenue to essential public safety services, local agencies struggle to meet these growing demands.

HB 3556 would provide much-needed flexibility for highly tourism-impacted communities to use TLT funds for critical law enforcement and public safety services. Ensuring that these funds can be used to support emergency response efforts is not only a matter of public safety—it is essential to sustaining tourism itself. Visitors expect a safe environment when they travel, and maintaining strong public safety services is just as critical to tourism as promotion and marketing.

For these reasons, we strongly urge you to move HB 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue without recommendation, allowing for a full and informed discussion on how to best support law enforcement agencies and the tourism-impacted communities they serve.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Matthew D. Phillips".

Matthew D. Phillips, Sheriff