



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

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

On behalf of the Gearhart Fire Department, we urgently request that you move House Bill 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue without recommendation so it can receive the in-depth financial and policy discussion it urgently requires.

Tourism brings millions of visitors to Oregon each year—boosting local economies while placing tremendous strain on public safety services. Fire agencies, especially in rural and tourism-heavy areas like Gearhart, face mounting challenges as emergency calls for wildfires, medical incidents, water rescues, and highway accidents continue to rise. HB 3556 is essential for ensuring that communities impacted by tourism have the tools and flexibility to respond effectively and protect both residents and visitors.

Despite these increasing demands, current law restricts how local governments may use new or increased Transient Lodging Tax (TLT) revenues. Under ORS 320.350, 70% must be directed toward tourism promotion and facilities, leaving only 30% for local discretion—regardless of the growing strain on essential public safety services.

This imbalance has real consequences. Between 2019 and 2024, visitors accounted for a significant share of emergency calls in Clatsop County. Our county EMS provider averages 382 calls per month, with peak months exceeding that by over 14%. Eleven fire agencies in the county—many of them volunteer-staffed—are increasingly stretched thin, responding to high-risk emergencies with limited resources and funding.

HB 3556 would allow communities like Gearhart to allocate TLT revenue where it is most urgently needed: fire and emergency services. This isn't just a public safety issue—it's a tourism issue. Visitors expect safe destinations. Without strong, responsive fire and EMS agencies, the visitor experience—and Oregon's tourism economy—is at risk.

We strongly urge you to advance HB 3556 to the House Committee on Revenue without recommendation to ensure that this critical conversation can move forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Josh M. Como".

Josh Como, Fire Chief
Gearhart Fire Department