

April 20, 2011

Re: Testimony in support of HB2167 from Michael Aronson, Associate Director, Cinema Studies Program, University of Oregon

My name is Michael Aronson, I am a professor of film & media studies at the University of Oregon in Eugene. I am pleased to be here in support of HB 2167, as the Associate Director of the University's undergraduate Cinema Studies Program. This interdisciplinary program is one of the University's newest - it became official in January 2010 - and it is one of the fastest growing in the University's history, with over 250 students currently majoring in Cinema Studies. Considering the daily interest we are getting from potential students, parents and high-school guidance counselors across the state and country, there is every indication that program will continue to grow at a robust rate over the next few years. Our major gives Oregon students the opportunity to study cinema from the perspective of history, theory, and production. We use the term 'cinema' rather than 'film' as a broader term that encompasses the diverse forms of moving image media, which we see as an intrinsic and increasingly crucial aspect of 21st century life.

By choosing this area of study, Cinema Studies students have already embraced the challenge of an evolving cultural, economic and technological environment. On completing the major, are students well prepared to guide change rather than react to it, and they are equipped with the skills for a wide range of employment, especially in careers related to moving image development and production. Ideally these jobs will be created in Oregon and filled by our state's citizens who are educated at local colleges and Universities.

UO Cinema is too young to be able to provide you with useful job placement statistics, but I do want to briefly address how the state's current commitment to the film industry is positively impacting our student's lives, specifically in terms of internships with companies that wouldn't be here without incentives. The conundrum of needing experience to get experience is nowhere more true than in the competitive fields of the film industry. Internships, when the stakes are relatively low on both sides, are often a crucial step in a student securing a well-paying job in the industry after they graduate. We are in the process of building robust internship and career services for our students but already we have been highly successful in placing students on internships with major productions including a number currently working on this season of Leverage, the TBS series filming in and around Portland. This kind of experience is literally priceless, and without out doubt will help our students achieve success in the job market when they graduate.

University of Oregon, with the support of the state, has made what I believe is a very smart investment to educate our students, the media producers of the future. OPIF and its related programs help create jobs for them and so I urge you to recommend their continued place in our state's budget.