

Testimony in Support of HB 2470
House Rules Committee
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Good afternoon. My name is Bob Speltz. I live in Portland where I am the Director of Public Affairs at The Standard. I am also very pleased to be the Chair of the Oregon Cultural Trust board.

The Oregon Cultural Trust first grew out of conversations in the business and cultural community around the need for an innovative new strategy to increase funds for arts and culture. The business community knows that the arts, heritage and humanities create the kind of environment where people want to live and work and where business wants to invest and grow.

As Oregon's third largest publicly traded company, The Standard and our employees invest close to \$500,000 in arts and culture organizations in Oregon each year. We appreciate that the Legislature – through the Oregon Cultural Trust and Oregon's cultural tax credit – has created a powerful incentive for individuals and businesses to increase giving to culture.

Why is this important? The Cultural Trust makes grants to support the arts, heritage and humanities in every corner of Oregon. You'll hear from others today about the cultural coalitions supported by the Trust in each of Oregon's 36 counties and 6 of the 9 federally recognized tribes.

The Trust's competitive grants – available to arts, heritage and humanities groups for significant projects help address some of Oregon's most pressing issues – education, safe communities and lifelong learning.

Ethos Music Center in North Portland is one example:

The Cultural Trust awarded a \$10,000 grant to Ethos in 2012 that first sent two AmeriCorps teachers to teach music in small schools. That program has since grown to 10 teachers providing music instruction to 19 rural schools, in Fossil, Condon, Long Creek, Monument, Elkton, and Warm Springs, reaching close to 3,000 students. The

AmeriCorps volunteers teach music full time, offer after- school lessons, and organize performances by students as well as visiting musical groups.

In Portland, Ethos has become a hub for youth and families, providing affordable music lessons for students, many of whom receive free or reduced lunches. The Ethos Music Center includes a café, performance hall, studios and classrooms where 423 students took lessons in Fall 2012. They serve 2,000 local youth a year, including students of the *Hip Hop Lab*, who learn to DJ, mix beats, write lyrics and make music videos. Ethos' building was boarded up and abandoned when the group acquired it in 2005. They've not only been a leaders in the revitalization of North Killingsworth, but in making their music students part of that success.

The Trust also recognizes five statewide partner agencies:

- Oregon Humanities
- Oregon Historical Society
- Oregon Arts Commission
- Oregon Heritage Commission
- The State Historic Preservation Office

These organizations help achieve the Trust's goal of increasing participation in culture across the state. The Standard is located near the Oregon Historical Society where, thanks to a cultural partner grant from the Oregon Cultural Trust, OHS has a fulltime Education Curator who develops programs that attract close to 10,000 school children each year. An additional 3,500 students and adults used the Historical Society's traveling trunks in their own communities.

Over its ten year history, the Cultural Trust is seen as a national model for investing in culture. It's reflective of some of Oregon's other unique public policies:

- It's ranked with the Bottle Bill, Beach Bill and Vote By Mail among our most innovative policies
- It's practices are open, fair and transparent, welcoming all types of groups
- Involvement is encouraged in every county and tribe
- It creates value throughout the state and connects Oregonians to our history, creativity, and the pulse of our communities.

The Cultural Trust unites a network of 1,300 cultural organizations that:

- Employ Oregonians who pay state and local taxes
- Inspire our children
- Bridge our differences
- Bring visitors to our state

- And transform our communities.

The Standard is one of many businesses who support passage of HB 2470, and extension of Oregon's innovative cultural tax credit. I ask for the committee's support.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I would be happy to answer any questions.