

## HB2470 Testimony to House Rules Committee: 2/18/13 State Capitol

Good morning, Chair Garrett and Committee Members

Thank you for taking testimony today about HB2470. My name is Georgia Harker, and as the current Chair of the Cultural Coalition of Washington Co., I'm honored to be able to tell you how the Oregon Cultural Trust has made a difference in our county, and why I think Gov. Kitzhaber recommended the Tax Credit be renewed.

The OCT manages a really innovative program in which Oregonians who have already made donations to their favorite libraries, museums, and heritage groups, can donate a matching amount to the Cultural Trust and then request a tax credit for that amount. All of those donations to the Cultural Trust are then distributed statewide.

In our last cycle, our piece of that pie in Washington Co. was just over \$38K. We received applications from 32 organizations, and were able to award grants to 23 of those. Grants last year ranged from \$900 to \$2000.

Since 2005 our county's coalition has distributed over \$263,076 from the Cultural Trust to nearly 70 organizations.

And just to be clear, when we say "cultural" we're talking about a really diverse collection of projects, events and ah-ha moments for thousands of people in Washington County. The most exciting part of being a member of this coalition has been my exposure to the amazing breadth of groups doing fantastic things in our county.

Groups like Painted Sky who increased access to their Native Dance Labs. And the Willowbrook Center Summer Program and the Broadway Rose Theater Co. who both used grant money to add openings in their programs for underserved youth. In rural Washington Co., the Helvetia Community Association educates about local history by hosting their Helvetia Cultural Fest. Hillsboro Community Arts offers free music and performances at their public Showtime at Shute! Concert Series. OCT funding has also reached hundreds of people through grants to groups like Friends of the Plains Library with their One Book One Community Program, and to the brand-spanking new Aloha Community Library's Summer Reading Program for children.

We also help educators fund special projects that they couldn't do otherwise – like the series of dance performances that ACMA high school presented for other schools and the public.

These groups ask for small grants to bridge wide gaps between the many ethnic, socio-economic, educational and cultural divides of a very diverse Washington County.

Their offerings change us, especially when experienced together in our schools, our parks, and our downtowns. They build community and delight, and they pull people out of their homes and into our public places to see, feel, create and even buy, together.

That's why this program is a win-win for all. It promotes tourism, entices people to attend events in our parks and downtowns, it's good for businesses, and it involves and

excites people of all ages. It helps us keep doors to inspiration, curiosity and ideas open for everyone.

OCT helps to fund arts and cultural events that might not otherwise happen, and in tight economic times, our grants are extremely appreciated and beneficial. As an ex-art teacher I know how very great the need is for more public-access culture.

I realize the state is looking to maximize efficiencies and cut waste – to get the biggest bang for our bucks (thanks you for that) – and that all tax credits are therefore under scrutiny.

That makes sense, especially since most tax credits just put money back into the pocket of one person or corporation, which may or may not decide to spend it in ways that help our state. The Oregon Cultural Trust tax credit, however, is very different. A taxpayer only gets it if a) they've already given to an Oregon group and b) if they've given again to the Oregon Cultural Trust -- which then gives donated money to every county in our state to fund more projects. It multiplies itself, and helps to grow all of us.

Thank you for doing the right and the cost-effective thing: extending this tax credit so more and more people all over Oregon can benefit. This far-reaching program costs the state little yet rewards thousands of people year-round. Please extend it, for every Oregonian's sake.

I strongly agree with Andy Duyck, the Chair of the Washington Co. Board of Commissioners, in his recent letter to our state reps when he said, "Renewing the Oregon Cultural Trust Tax Credit has a small impact on state resources, but it makes a huge impact on the cultural life of Oregon's communities." He and I both hope you will support the reauthorization of this tax credit.

Thank you.

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