

Testimony in Support of SB 319

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Oregon Cultural Trust board

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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. I'm here today speaking in support of Senate Bill 319 and I appreciate the opportunity to share my perspective about Oregon's Cultural Tax Credit and the Oregon Cultural Trust.

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.

Bag & Baggage Productions in Hillsboro is one example. Bag & Baggage is the only professional theatre company in Hillsboro and one of only two professional theatres in all of Washington County. The Cultural Trust awarded a \$4,000 grant to Bag & Baggage in 2011 to produce a world premiere of an adaptation of “Macbeth” that explores the age old question: what happened to the children of Macbeth? This world premiere offered a perspective based on scholarly research, original source materials and literary analysis of Lady Macbeth’s role, exploring the themes of greed and motherhood in a contemporary context.

The production – in Hillsboro – as the only major literary adaptation of a Shakespearean text in the Portland metro area. It attracted upwards of 480 students from Hillsboro District High Schools, providing them with free access to performances of Shakespeare – right in downtown Hillsboro at the Venetian Theater.

Bag & Baggage’s TEN4ONE education program, offering free tickets to high school students, is designed specifically to increase access to the arts – and removes the barrier of buying tickets for students, many of whom are traditionally underserved. And the company’s work with Pacific University students in Forest Grove gave them unique access with the adapter, Scott Palmer, and the actors in “talk back” style conversations.

I’m pleased that The Standard supports Bag & Baggage through our company’s charitable giving because of their high quality programs and their commitment to engaging youth.

The Trust also recognizes and provides operating support for 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. In fact, 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.

Today, ten years since its inception, 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 SB 319, 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.