



culturaladvocacycoalition

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March 16, 2015

To: Chair Beyer, Members of the Senate Business and Transportation Committee

From: Chris Coleman, Artistic Director, Portland Center Stage; President Cultural Advocacy Coalition

Re: SB 441, testimony in support

The Cultural Advocacy Coalition supports SB441, which modernizes and strengthens the Oregon Cultural Trust, by clarifying its statutory language and allowing it to have greater impact in the cultural community through increased distribution from donations each year.

The Oregon Cultural Trust was created to serve as a repository of public and private funds. Private donations to the Trust are eligible for a state tax credit and donations are distributed or held in the fund on a percentage basis, set by statute. Currently, 58% of every donation is retained in the fund corpus. Of the remaining 42%, 7.5% is dedicated to administration and the remaining 34.5% is divided equally among three categories: five cultural partner agencies; a statewide network of volunteer-based cultural coalitions in each county; and cultural 501c(3) nonprofits through Cultural Development Grants, which are the only Trust funds which are distributed on a competitive basis.

Donations to the Oregon Cultural Trust serve as a dedicated source of revenues to preserve and support cultural activities which are unique to Oregon's identity, including our shared and individual sense of heritage, history, place, creativity and art, traditions and customs. Distribution of funds donated to the Trust, as set in statute, have not been revisited by the legislature in the 14 years since the Trust was created.

The Coalition supports SB441 to allow for greater investment in the work of cultural nonprofits while protecting current statewide partners, tribes and county cultural coalitions. Passing SB 441 will increase the distribution of currently available resources and allow the Oregon Cultural Trust, without new taxes or new General Fund expenditures, to act as an even more powerful tool to advance place-based economic development; expand access to arts and culture; and attract and retain educated citizens as well as the innovative businesses who employ them.

The Oregon Cultural Trust is a uniquely Oregon concept, which partners directly with Oregonians to advance culture in our state through personal and corporate donations. The Cultural Advocacy Coalition supports the Trust as a valuable resource for Oregon's cultural community. The Coalition affirms the tenets which underpin the Trust's mission, as well as its economic and strategic value to the achievement of statewide policy objectives in community development, health care, jobs and education.