

April 6, 2017

VIA EMAIL ONLY ([hecdt.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov](mailto:hecdt.exhibits@oregonlegislature.gov))

Chair, Representative Ann Lininger  
Vice-Chair, Representative Pam Marsh  
Vice-Chair, Representative David Brock Smith  
House Committee on Economic Development and Trade

**Re: Written Testimony in Support of HB 3139 with the -2 Amendment**

Dear Chair Lininger, Vice-Chair Marsh, Vice-Chair Brock Smith and Members of the Committee:

I am the Chair of the Board of Trustees of the High Desert Museum (“Museum”). I am writing in support of HB 3139 with the proposed -2 Amendment.

The Oregon Arts Commission recently changed its eligibility criteria for its Operating Support Grant Program and its Arts Learning Grant Program, determining that arts institutions like the Museum are no longer eligible for certain grant funding. In so doing, I think that the Commission has strayed, however inadvertently, from the intent of the legislature when it originally passed SB 145 in 1967. At that time, the legislators articulated that the premise of the Arts Program was to encourage the arts to flourish throughout the state and not to focus on the type of art, but rather the quality of the art. The bill seeks to restore the status quo and return to the original legislative intent of promoting quality art, whatever form, throughout the state.

The bill amends the statutory definition of “arts” to clarify that museum-related activities are included within the definition. The amendment is aligned with the museum-related activities that are supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. Clarifying that Oregon’s statutory definition of art is aligned with the NEA is good public policy and should facilitate efficient operation of the Arts Program by the Oregon Arts Commission.

The bill also instructs the Director of the Oregon Business Development Department to adopt rules for the grant programs administered by the Arts Program. The objective of such rules would be to ensure that (a) the criteria used to determine the eligibility for grant awards take into account regional differences in public access to, or in opportunities for engagement in, arts and cultural development in the state and (b) promote investment in communities where opportunities for engagement in arts and cultural development is limited. That objective is particularly important because the Arts Program grant programs are largely funded by monies from the state's general fund. As a matter of fairness and equity, those monies should be distributed according to well-known, objective, and transparent criteria that promote the arts throughout the state.

Thank you for your time.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Josh Newton". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

JOSH NEWTON