



EUGENE SYMPHONY

DANAIL RACHEV
Music Director & Conductor

SCOTT FRECK
Executive Director

April 20, 2017

RE: HB 5025

Dear Co-Chairs Johnson and Gomberg, and members of the Committee:

I write today on behalf of the Eugene Symphony Association, and as a member of the board of directors of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition, to urge you to reconsider the reduction in funding for the Oregon Arts Commission currently being contemplated in HB 5025, and instead revise OAC's funding upward, back to current levels.

The proposed reduction would have a direct and dramatic impact on the ability for arts organizations throughout the state to serve their local populations. The operating support grants which the Eugene Symphony Association and the dozens upon dozens of other non-profit arts groups receive is vital to our missions – not only do the dollars that we receive directly help us to offer the educational and life-improving services that Oregonians receive, but the commitment on the part of the State of Oregon inspires private citizens, corporations, and charitable foundations to similarly invest in this work.

A reduction of 30% of the annual operating support that the Eugene Symphony Association receives from OAC would total roughly \$7,500. That may not seem like much in the context of the State's budget, but for a small non-profit like ours, it is quite significant. Here's why:

- We perform educational Youth Concerts for as many as 8,000 elementary students each year, many of whom have never been to a live professional arts experience before; further, we have a long-standing policy of waiving the \$5 admission fee for any child unable to pay, so \$7,500 equates to 1,500 third-graders who would otherwise miss out on the opportunity to have their eyes and ears opened to the power of people working together to create music;
- We offer specialized music education training in Eugene 4J School District's BEST Afterschool program, teaching primarily low-income students the basic elements of music as a means of trying to reduce the "achievement gap" between them and more privileged students. \$7,500 equates to more than half of the cost of this program;
- We have recently begun a series called Symphony Connect which brings chamber music into the lives of clients at several of Lane County's human service agencies such as St. Vincent de Paul, Riverfront Alternative High School, Cornerstone Community Housing, and Laurel Hill Center for people with cognitive impairment. \$7,500 also equates to more than half of the cost of this program.

We consider operating support to be the lifeblood of our contributed income, as it allows us the flexibility to allocate the funding to the education and community engagement work that we do in our area does receive significant earned revenue, such as ticket sales or participation fees. This support from the State allows us to reach the people in our community who need it the most.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I sincerely hope you will reconsider any potential reduction of funding to the OAC, and the work that it allows us to do for the citizens of Oregon.

Sincerely yours,

Scott Freck
Executive Director

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