

The Honorable Arnie Roblan
The Honorable Paul Holvey
The Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus Response
Oregon State Capitol
Salem, OR 97301

Dear Co-Chairs Roblan and Holvey and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Oregon Symphony, I commend you for your leadership in attacking the spread of COVID-19. The state of emergency that Governor Brown declared, along with the President's announcement of a national emergency, underscores the significant public health and economic crises for our state and nation.

As you consider the many requests that you will receive for emergency assistance, I urge you to come to the aid of the Oregon Symphony. We calculate that the Symphony **could lose more than \$5 million** in revenue before June 2020. We will not survive such a blow. As one of the largest nonprofit cultural institutions in Oregon and as the oldest orchestra in the Western U.S., we must ensure that the myriad ways in which we serve this state survive beyond the coronavirus.

From inspirational productions like *emergency shelter intake form*, which shined a light on the homeless crisis and for which Governor Brown joined me onstage at the Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, to our work in Title 1 schools across this region, our community needs the healing power of music today, more than ever. Further, as publicly funded studies detail, arts groups like the Oregon Symphony contribute hundreds of millions of dollars to our state's economy.

Unlike most other businesses, ours relies on bringing large numbers of people together frequently in a confined space—precisely what we are banned from doing. Without emergency funding, we can no longer employ 800 full- or part-time musicians, artists, and staff—who together anchor the arts ecology of Oregon. Moreover, we will need to shut down this 125-year-old business, which each year serves hundreds of thousands of people through live performances, tens of thousands more children and adults through our offstage engagement programs, and tens of millions worldwide via syndicated broadcasts.

In recent years, local government has stressed our operation—with the City of Portland reducing our annual grants by more than \$500k and Metro increasing the annual costs to perform in our hall by another \$500k—to the point that we have had to spend our reserves. Nevertheless, we have been prudent stewards of the public's investment in us: for more than a decade, we have balanced our budget and incurred no debt; at the same time, we have expanded our work in the community. Today—in addition to more than 110 onstage concerts each year—we connect with our neighbors in schools, libraries, neighborhoods, correctional facilities, sports venues, retirement homes, homeless shelters, hospitals, and immigration centers. Such work has been possible primarily thanks to individuals, who have bought tickets and made donations in record numbers.

We continue to raise money and reduce costs, yet all of the Symphony's good work and goodwill stands on the brink of collapse. You have the ability to save this artistic institution at the heart of Oregon's greater community.

I stand ready to discuss this matter with you or your staff at your earliest opportunity. Thank you.
Sincerely,



Scott Showalter
President & CEO
Oregon Symphony

921 SW Washington St, Ste 200 | Portland, OR 97205

☎ 503.416.6372

✉ sshowalter@orsymphony.org

🌐: [website](#)