

TO: Members of the Joint Special Committee on Coronavirus,

There are many concerns being addressed to your committee. Please add to that list my personal concern for our non-profit arts organizations which are an invaluable contribution to our culture in Oregon. These organizations are part of what makes our State a viable environment where people like to vacation, visit and then move to for work or retirement. Arts organizations and particularly Portland Center Stage at the Armory where I am a board member as well as a founding partner, survives on a very thin margin. We receive little public funding and no advocacy or vocal support on the part of our city, county or State. The closure of our theater which is our responsibility to help contain the spread of the virus leaves our company with a huge financial deficit, puts our employees on furlough with only medical coverage after 2 weeks, causes new losses from closing two current productions as well as the likelihood of not being able to complete our season ending in June. Tickets will need to be refunded or carried forward into next year, again giving us additional current financial losses and compromising our next fiscal year budget.

Coupled with this in our organization and all non-profit arts organizations is the service sector which we rely on to make our systems function. These people are hourly employees, many living pay check to pay check. Closure for any period of time is detrimental to them and devastating when that time goes for many weeks. Last week as our arts organization as well as many others plus small businesses were in the process of closing, these employees found that the State website for seeking unemployment insurance had crashed.

I implore you to provide financial assistance to non-profit arts organizations and to create a financial safety net for service employees. Eventually this pandemic will be resolved, and we will want to rebuild our State as a valuable and viable place. We will not be able to do that without considerable financial assistance from our government.

Thank you for your consideration of these critical issues.

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