

*Testimony to and in reference to:*

House Committee on Economic Development

RE: HB 2132, Oregon Cultural Trust

Extends sunset for tax credit for contributions to Trust for Cultural Development Account.

Dear Committee Members,

The mission of the August Wilson Red Door Project is to change the racial ecology of Portland through the arts. We are an Oregon Cultural Trust grant recipient, and we are writing to express our full support of extending the sunset for tax credit for contributions to the Trust for Cultural Development Account for six years.

The Oregon Cultural Trust has supported our work for the last two years. In 2017-18, they supported our arts education program for high school students, the August Wilson Monologue Competition. This is a national competition for high school students who learn and perform monologues from August Wilson's plays. The program presents a rare opportunity for black students in the Portland metro area to perform culturally-relevant roles, and for non-black students to engage in intensive empathetic study of black culture. Students who have participated in Portland's August Wilson Monologue Competition have gone on to pursue careers in the theatre, including Hailey Kilgore, who is currently starring in *Once on This Island* on Broadway.

Our second grant was produce our new play and continue our work with the Portland Police Bureau. *Cop Out: Beyond Black, White & Blue* explores race and profiling from the perspective of police officers. We developed this play in conversation with the play, *Hands Up: 7 Playwrights, 7 Testaments*, developed by The New Black Fest in the wake of Michael Brown's death in Ferguson, Missouri. *Hands Up* features seven monologues that reflect the playwrights' personal experiences with profiling. Our ongoing tour of *Hands Up* brought us into contact with local police officers who were motivated to help bridge the divide between police and the community. Law enforcement and criminal justice agencies across the region, the state, and the country have expressed interest in the portrayals and ideas in both *Hands Up* and *Cop Out*, validating the idea that theatre and expertly facilitated conversation can help create an environment where people can let down their protective walls and understand one another.

Culture shapes reality. Oregon's cultural heritage is not only the lifeblood of this state; it is the fuel that moves us towards a better world. We urge you to extend the sunset for the cultural tax credit so that we as a state can continue to shape a future where all people can thrive. Thank you.

Sincerely,

The Red Door Team

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