

I am writing to request that the Ways and Means Committee allocate funds from the state to save the Portland Children's Museum and its attached entities including Opal Charter School, Opal Beginning School, and the Center for Teaching and Learning. The slated closure of these institutions represents a huge cultural and educational loss for families in Portland, including diverse and traditionally underserved communities.

As we emerge from this Covid health crisis families will need safe, engaging spaces to return to like the Portland Children's Museum. Young children, more than ever, will need opportunities for play based education that supports their social emotional development and their connection to their local community. It is shocking to me that the only Children's Museum in the region would be allowed to fail. Furthermore, the Opal School children have experienced so much loss over the past year, now including their educational home and learning community. The social emotional impact of this decision on these children is tremendous and grave. The Portland Children's Museum is currently slated to close permanently on June 30th and financial troubles have been cited as the main reason for closing this 75 year old institution.

The PCM Board of Directors meeting minutes from February show that as little as \$500,000 is needed in funding to get through this calendar year.

I believe that funding from the state, the American Rescue Plan, major benefactors, and community members could save these Portland treasures. The decision the Ways and Means committee makes will have a big impact on our ability to move forward with saving them. Please vote to allocate funds to help keep Portland a fun, engaging, safe, and educational place for kids by providing funding to the Portland Children's Museum.