



Furthering Human Rights and Civil Rights Education at the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education

This written testimony is submitted by Judy Margles, Director of the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education in support of the 11 cultural capital construction projects put forward by the Cultural Advocacy Coalition.

OJMCHE has seized the opportunity to increase its local urban footprint and amplify its regional, national, and international voice to illuminate the root causes and manifestations of violent ethno-nationalism in our world today. Our \$400,000 request for State of Oregon funds will support the acquisition and renovation of the Charles Hartman Gallery, which will be joined with the Museum's existing main gallery, to become a space that provides students, educators, policy makers, thought leaders, historians, and visitors with the opportunity to explore human rights and civil rights. OJMCHE will dramatically enhance the power and reach of its core mission — to challenge our visitors to resist indifference and discrimination and to envision a just and inclusive world — and include the contemporary lived experience of hate, racism, discrimination, and persecution.

In 2016, the OJMCHE mounted an ambitious, \$7.5 million capital campaign to purchase its current 15,000-square-foot home in Portland's North Park Blocks on the seam between the Pearl and Old Town, relieving the combined Oregon Jewish Museum and former Oregon Holocaust Resource Center from the burden of lease obligations for the first time in their respective histories. The campaign met with remarkable success, achieving more than 60% of its philanthropic fundraising goal in the first 45 days. The balance was secured within two years, and since 2018, OJMCHE's traveling and permanent exhibitions, retail activities, and administrative operations have continued to thrive in their new home.

Predictably, however, with the institution's rising profile and remarkable programmatic successes in recent years, OJMCHE now requires additional space to meet the needs of an inevitable evolution of its mission to confront today's complex times. The opportunity to expand into the Charles Hartman Gallery next door, providing an additional 1,000 square feet of multi-purpose space suitable for education, lectures, interactive presentations, and specialized exhibitions, has created a most exciting and urgent \$1.2 million fundraising challenge.



The Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education (OJMCHE) explores the legacy of the Jewish experience in Oregon, teaches the universal lessons of the Holocaust, and provides opportunities for intercultural conversation. OJMCHE challenges our visitors to resist indifference and discrimination and to envision a just and inclusive world.

Since moving to Portland's North Park Blocks in 2017, OJMCHE has provided a unique and profound opportunity for contemplative and interactive understanding of the richness of the Jewish experience. It fosters a deeper examination of Jewish values and traditions as a means to teach about the Holocaust and to unite all people in their common humanity—through connecting, outreach, and education.

This past four years has given us many powerful opportunities to see what our expanded facilities and educational programming have brought to the cultural fabric of the state.

KEY FACTS

- Before temporary closure last March the Oregon Jewish Museum and Center for Holocaust Education (OJMCHE) had seen a tripling of attendance, and a doubling of membership over three years and believed that we were really making our mark in terms of our ability to reach new audiences, reaching 35,000 visitors, including 18,000 students who came to the museum to learn about the Holocaust and other genocides, the forces of prejudice, and Jewish contributions to world culture and ideas.
- We also believe that we were – and will continue to do so when we reopen in June -- contributing to the economic impact of the neighborhood, with visitors dining in nearby restaurants, shopping in stores and staying in hotels.
- When now Senate Majority Leader Rob Wagner began his initiative to mandate statewide Holocaust education, we worked with him on its passage. The focus became required education about the Holocaust and genocide, and an expanded mandate to provide students with a foundation for examining the history of myriad forms of discrimination in Oregon.
- To further the goals of SB664 and our own goals, we are purchasing a 1000 sf space adjacent to the museum to connect with the museum's existing galleries and become a space that explores human rights and civil rights. In this way the museum will dramatically enhance the power and reach of its core mission — to challenge our visitors to resist indifference and discrimination and to envision a just and inclusive world — and include the contemporary lived experience of hate, racism, discrimination, and persecution so evident in today's complex times.
- OJMCHE staff and board love our neighborhood and mourn the devastation that it has seen in the past year. We want the museum to continue to be a bright light and truly believe that our new gallery can make a significant contribution to the economic re-vitalization of the neighborhood.
- On behalf of the museum, the ten other cultural organizations and the Cultural Advocacy Coalition we respectfully request that you consider these projects for capital construction funding.