



Oregon State Legislature
Joint Committee on Ways & Means
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
Via Email Only

April 21, 2021

Co-Chairs Girod, Holvey, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Theresa May and I am an Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies for Theatre Arts at the University of Oregon. I teach in Villard Hall, and my office is also housed in the building. Villard Hall, which opened in 1886, was the second academic building to open on the UO campus, and is part of the Heritage Project with University Hall. These buildings are the birthplace of public higher education in Oregon, and they continue to house important academic programs and serve thousands of students every year. I urge you to protect this National Historic Landmark and ensure that these buildings are able to serve students for years to come by funding the Heritage Renovation Project at \$58.5 million.

Today, Villard Hall is home to UO's Theater Arts program. The Department of Theatre Arts at the University of Oregon serves a variety of students with a wide range of needs and interests, and has graduated playwrights, directors, and famous actors and actresses, including Heidi Shreck's hit, "This is my Constitution," which has played on Off-Broadway, toured the nation, and was recently also produced on/by Amazon.

Our students deserve to learn, grow, and hone their acting abilities in an accessible, safe facility. Villard Hall, like University Hall, is not currently accessible for all students. Doorways lack adequate height and necessary width for ADA accessibility. The narrow, tight spaces and ADA inaccessibility is consistent throughout Villard and University Halls, in stairways, bathrooms, elevators, and lobby spaces.

Additionally, as we prepare to hopefully host in-person performances once it has been deemed safe to gather, we will be inviting members of the public to attend performances in a severely seismically deficient building constructed with unreinforced masonry that will fail and collapse in a Cascadia earthquake. As this committee considers requests, I hope you will prioritize the Heritage Renovation Project because it will not only protect students and faculty in the event of an earthquake or other disaster, it will protect members of the public who attend student productions.



Further, the mechanical and network rooms are insufficient in size and contain obsolete equipment, asbestos piping, and infrastructure operating well beyond its useful life. The mechanics of the building spill out into common space with asbestos and exposed piping and wiring. As an actress, I am well-versed in creating illusions, but it is difficult to suspend disbelief in a space that is dangerous for our faculty, staff, and students.

Finally, water infiltration behind the historic façade is exacerbating the deterioration of the historical elements. The birthplace of public higher education in Oregon is slowly deteriorating, and we have an opportunity to restore and protect these historic buildings for future generations. I hope you will protect these historic buildings and invest in the success of our students and Theater Arts program by funding the Heritage Renovation Project.

Sincerely,

Theresa May
Associate Professor and Director of Graduate Studies for Theatre Arts