



TESTIMONY

February 7, 2022

TESTIMONY OF AMANDA STARK, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
THE OLD CHURCH CONCERT HALL

Dear Representative John Lively and House Committee of Economic Recovery and Prosperity,

I strongly urge you, on behalf of Oregon's cultural venues and organizations, to support House Bill 4040 and restore \$50,000,000 of the ARP funding to the Arts, intended for recovery and rebuilding of this hardest hit industry, an industry that is vital to the well-being and uplifting of our society.

My name is Amanda Stark. I am the Executive Director of The Old Church, aka TOC, a beloved nonprofit concert hall and nationally registered historic landmark in Portland, Oregon. TOC was established in 1968 with a mission of enhancing culture and community through the arts while preserving the 1882 former church building. For almost 55 years our venue has stood as an ever-welcoming cultural living room. TOC has presented and hosted countless arts organizations, local and international musicians and artists, and free community programs for people of all ages and backgrounds. TOC sustained itself for years through earned revenue, all while investing in state-of-the-art sound and lighting systems to attract world class artists and larger audiences. COVID-19 changed everything. We were shuttered for the better part of 2 years, during which time we also lost our long-time tenant. Striving to permanently reopen while navigating a highly transmissible disease, staffing shortages, and wage and supply cost increases is a daunting and expensive process. We reopened in September 2021 during the Delta surge, only to be hit hard by Omicron in the new year. In 2022 we lost 90% of our scheduled January events due to COVID-19-related artist cancelations, along with 65% (so far) of February events.

Eventually the pandemic will become endemic, and we will get back on our feet, but it will take time. We need this support to bridge the gap during this most crucial phase of rebuilding and recovery. TOC is vital to the rejuvenation of a neighborhood so clearly struggling with the pandemic's lingering effects, and we cannot do it alone. The passing of HB4040 will help to sustain Oregon's cultural venues and organizations, revitalize our economy, and bring much needed healing to our communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A Stark'.

Amanda Stark

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