

Submitter: Marilou Carrera
On Behalf Of: Headwaters Theatre and Water in the Desert
Committee: House Committee On Economic Recovery and Prosperity
Measure: HB4040

Dear Congressional members,

The team at The Headwaters Theatre / Water in the Desert is writing to ask you to support House Bill 4040 to provide additional funding relief to the hardest-hit industry sectors in Oregon. We are well aware of how vital live performance is in Oregon and know that venues are an essential aspect of Oregon's economic recovery. Yet as we all transition into the latest stage of the pandemic, venues are challenged to reopen due to the lack of revenue from the past two years.

The Headwaters Theatre, based in North Portland, offers free, subsidized rehearsal and studio space to artists from numerous communities that tend to have the least access and whom we know have been hit the hardest during this pandemic: Black, Indigenous, People of Color, Disabled, Immigrant, Trans, Elder, Queer, Working / Low income, and Butoh artists, organizers, and healers. We are excited to continue this program in 2022 and rely largely on grants and donations to make this happen. We also began renting theatre and studio space again last year, but the number of rentals was small prior to large-scale vaccination efforts and declined even more in recent months due to the surge of COVID cases from Delta and Omicron. These changes have all had an impact on our budget and capacity (both have decreased). Since we have not had in-person events, we also had to stop using our concessions - keeping this stocked no longer made sense. Concessions were a source of revenue for us and they also provided an opportunity for us to partner with some of the local businesses - we provided their products during shows, increasing visibility to the local commerce. We continue to observe and work with COVID guidelines from the CDC. In conjunction with our current capacity, we have not hosted any public in-person events in January or the months prior. In the meantime, we have noted that some of our fixed costs have increased, namely our rent.

We know we are not the only ones facing challenges. 2022 has been a very difficult year for many of our colleagues and the road to recovery is long. No industry was closed longer or is experiencing as long a hardship as ours. Collectively, our engagement with audiences and community is still way, way down and cancellations/postponements still occur regularly.

The initial round of relief funding allowed many of us to keep our doors open and we are deeply appreciative of this. However, independent venues face permanent closure if further relief is not offered to our industry and interconnected businesses, as we anticipate a difficult and challenging recovery period. Venues bring community

and culture to places where these are deeply needed for connection. They also bring economic vitality to city centers and more distant neighborhoods, promoting tourism and the support of many other local businesses. And we need your help to bring them back! We hope you will support HB 4040 to save our vital arts venues.

Thank you,

The Headwaters/Water in the Desert Team
Crystal, keyon, Marilou Mariko, and Mizu