



Artists Repertory Theatre

Date: Monday, January 31, 2022

Re: House Bill #4040

Dear Chair Lively and Members of the House Economic Recovery Committee,

I am writing you as the Executive Director of Artists Repertory Theatre, Portland's oldest profession theater and as a volunteer serving as the chair of the board of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon – a nonprofit organization that represents the interests of Oregon's more than 1,400 arts, culture, heritage, and humanities organizations across the State of Oregon – 350 are our members.

I respectfully ask for your vote to pass HB #4040 which will provide \$50 million dollar in relief to Oregon's Arts and Culture sector.

The pandemic has had an extraordinary impact on cultural live event venues - 94% of venues had to cancel events, 70% reported the crisis is having a severe impact, and 83% have participated in COVID 19 mitigation efforts, including layoffs and furloughs. And of course, some organizations, like the Portland Children's Museum have permanently closed after serving the Oregon community for 75 years.

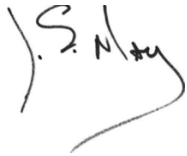
To bring it home to Artists Rep – we went from a \$4 million annual budget to \$2 million. We went from 24 FTEs to 10. Leadership took pay cuts. Without the support from the federal and state government, ART would not have survived. Using these recovery funds, ART has hired more than 250 artists hired at salaries comparable to regular productions. These artists have worked on more than 50 projects, which included audio dramas and short films. In January 2021 ART received the Oregon Media Production Association's Creative Innovation Award because of this pivot to audio and film. One of ART's films was selected to be part of the opening night of the Portland International Film festival and has been shown at 4 additional festivals.

The arts and culture sector employs 14,000 FTE; 9.9 million people annually attend arts events. Our audience normally spend \$323 million on hotels, restaurants, and other purchases as a direct result of attendance. Total economic impact based on organizational spending is \$687 million.

The funding from the state and federal government has allowed this sector to survive to this point. We are back performing before live audiences, but the Omicron variant has created a new series of challenges. ART's current play, a co-production with Portland Center Stage, has already had to cancel multiple performances due to breakthrough infections among the cast and crew. Audiences are also staying home because of Omicron.

There will be no recovery without the creativity of the arts and culture sector. Thank you for your consideration to dedicate \$50 million to the arts and culture through HB #4040.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JS May". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

JS May
Executive Director, ART
Board Chair, CACO