



February 8, 2022

From: Brian Ferriso, Portland Art Museum Director

Re: Testimony in support of House Bill 4040

I respectfully request your support of House Bill 4040, which allocates additional pandemic relief for Oregon's cultural organizations.

Over the past two years, federal and state relief dollars from the CARES and ARPA Acts allowed arts organizations, including the Portland Art Museum to remain solvent. However, the recapitalization of our Museum and the larger arts sector will require additional state investment in jobs and the core arts and culture programs that will help our community heal and reconnect.

Specifically, the Portland Art Museum and Northwest Film Center needs to rehire staff and build back programs that provide earned income, which comprised 26% of our budget (or \$4.7M annually in 2019). The loss of events and admissions due to closures during the pandemic forced the Museum to decrease our annual operating budget from \$18 million in FY20 (ending June 30, 2020) to \$13.5 million in FY21. That reduction affected more than one hundred full- or part-time positions that are critical to the core functions of a healthy museum, essential to the stewardship of the 50,000 works in the Museum's permanent collection, the development of virtual and in-person learning programs that serve children and adults, and the number of days per week the Museum is open to public.

The Museum is resilient, and our prudence over the past two years has ensured that we can continue to be a foundational resource to the arts and culture sector of Oregon. At the same time, too many arts organizations have gone out of business in our region or are struggling to retain the resources they need to achieve meaningful outcomes.

As the Portland Art Museum begins to rehire and rebuild, we face a \$1.5 million deficit in our FY22 budget. With a significant investment from the State of Oregon, would enable us to rebuild the Museum team, reintroduce access programs, such as Free Days and School Tours, and continue to prioritize community partnerships and artist services. The Museum will not be the same as before the pandemic; but to emerge stronger we need flexible general operating funding to help us regrow and reprioritize programs in response to changing mandates and community needs.

Additional state funds will not only serve as an investment in Oregon's arts and culture sector, but they will also be a catalyst for spending and tourism all throughout our region. Before the pandemic, and in the Portland Metro region alone, cultural nonprofits and their audiences spent more than \$330.4 million annually - 10x the national median spending of \$35.8 million per metropolitan area.

The Museum is now seeing 6,000 visitors weekly, driving event-related spending by audiences and valuable revenue for local merchants such as restaurants, retail stores, parking garages, and hotels. Research shows that communities with a vibrant cultural scene are more desirable to live in, have greater economic stability, and attract a more diverse and educated workforce. Our cultural sector has always been a point of pride for our region, and the leaders of Oregon must take action to ensure that artists, arts organizations, and artistic activities can continue to support the development and long term.

Thank you for your support of arts and culture in our state. And I ask you to continue that support with a yes vote on HB 4040.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Ferriso". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end.

Brian Ferriso
Director