

Jan 30, 2023

Dear Members of the Oregon Legislature:

The economic impact of art and entertainment programs, and the venues that host them, is well documented; multipliers can be calculated (conservatively at 2 – 3x) and metrics measured. Also well documented are the societal benefits of such programs: kids who participate in the arts do better in school and life; people make decisions about where to live based on cultural amenities because they want more to see, hear and do. In a word, the value of the arts to life is inarguable and the very reason our company motto is “It’s more than entertainment. It’s Life. Don’t miss it.”

Also inarguable is the devastation wrought on the art and entertainment industry by the pandemic. “First to close and last to open” broadly describes our industry as a whole and Oregon’s reality in particular. Mandates to close, mandates to restrict capacity, mandates to wear masks, were all dutifully followed and the effects are still being felt.

At the Craterian Theater, Medford’s art and culture Center, this past year we have experienced cancellations, dramatically increased costs, and diminished revenues from ticket sales, concessions, rentals and donations. Even so, our perception is that these trends have slowed, if not bottomed-out, and now comes the journey to recovery. And on each show night we employ more people, hire more vendors, and nearby restaurants are busy to overflowing.

There is no way to know how long this recovery will take, but what is known is that we need help to get there. What is also known is that the quality of life in our state would be immeasurably diminished by the diminution of our cultural resources. We read of Oregon’s shrinking population and wonder why people would choose to leave our beautiful state, or avoid it in the first place. Let’s prove to any doubters that Oregon understands the value of the arts and their contributions to a vital and vibrant community. Let’s not let failing art and entertainment venues be one more reason for people to look elsewhere when considering who has the most to offer, and the least.

All investments come with a risk, but when considering the positive potential of House Bill 2459 versus the negative effects of not passing it, the far greater risk to our economy and way of life is not the distribution of the funds in question, but the failure of art and entertainment venues that might have otherwise survived if they had only been thrown this lifeline.

Sincerely,

Stephen McCandless

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