



To: The Ways and Means Committee

Date: April 21, 2023

Good Afternoon Co-Chairs Steiner and Sanchez and Committee Members. I am here to speak in support of the Arts Recovery Fund Bill (HB 2459/SB 5506)

My name is Deborah Maher, and I am here as a board member of the Independent Venue Coalition and as the Executive Director of the Community Center for the Performing Arts also known as the WOW Hall in Eugene/Springfield. The WOW Hall is a historic venue on the historic register, built in 1932 and famous for its hardwood floating dance floor.

I have come to this position as the Executive Director after a **long career in community economic development and small business consulting and coaching** including NeighborWorks America (formerly Neighborhood Reinvestment Corporation), Baltimore City Development Corporation, and as an Exec. Director of a Community Economic Development Council.

This gives me a **unique understanding** of just how important performing arts venues are as economic anchors that generate community wealth. I have worked with small towns in Oregon and communities and Cities throughout the country.

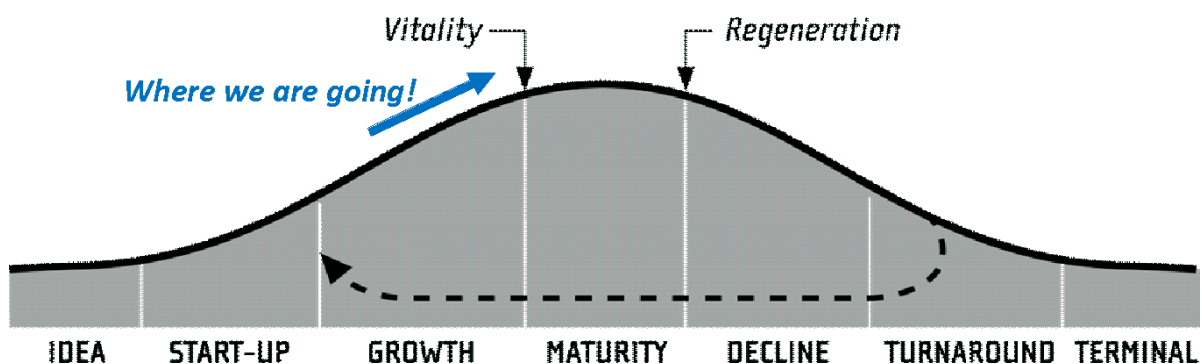


We all are **grateful for the financial support** that we have received to get us operating again but **more is needed. The initial investment helped us achieve stability, but we are not yet sustainable.**

I invite you to think about our request as **stages of investment capital.** First-stage funding has supported our “**turnaround**” and now we are seeking second-stage funding as an investment in our “**growth**” to propel us forward.

We have been creative and resourceful in generating earned income, but **we still have cancellations and lower ticket sales than in pre-pandemic times** and this continues to result in losses. The additional funding we are seeking would **augment our efforts and move us toward our sustainability goal.**

Organizational Lifecycle





The ROI can be measured by:

- **A multiplier:** for every dollar spent on tickets; 12 dollars is spent on surrounding businesses (translates to local jobs in restaurants, bars, hotels, transportation, and shopping)
- **Job creation** for those working in our venues.
- **New career opportunities**
- **Increased community engagement** and sense of place

Our venues are an essential part of building our statewide “**comeback economy**”. This means moving forward in new ways with more outreach, inclusion, more diverse programming, and creating a greater sense of belonging.

The WOW Hall, for example, is increasing its commitment as the community cultural anchor for downtown Eugene with our recently hired Community Voices Coordinator, increasing linkages to community leaders, support for emerging artists, cultural programming, new classes, and civic engagements in addition to our live performances.

Our venues are part of a community ecosystem and when we work **TOGETHER** in partnership with small businesses, local and State governments, community leaders, and residents, our synergies renew our vitality. No one sector can do it alone but when we combine our strengths and align to a common vision, **we transform our communities.**



Making Positive Transformation a Reality

