

Submitter: Matt Stringer
On Behalf Of:
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

I want to thank the Ways and Means committee's co-chairs Sanchez and Steiner and all the rest of the legislators for making this trip and coming to Ontario to see us. I, m a proud Oregonian and seeing our key decision makers here is a prideful thing.

My name is Matthew Stringer. I am a governor appointment commissioner of the Oregon Arts Commission. It has given me a lot of opportunities to engage our community and county in arts and culture. And very recently we have been able to work alongside a new arts & culture caucus that includes Representative Gomberg, Senator Hansel and 32 others from the senate and congress.

I am here today to speak about POP package 113, which asks for a \$10 million dollar line-item increase for the Oregon Arts Commission to fund grant requests, and will financially assist 100s more artists than presently. The Commission's budget has been flat for 16 years. As of today Oregon is the 38th state in terms of government arts funding. There are 100s more arts organizations today than there were 10 years ago. If this requested \$10 million is received, we will be the 14th state in per capita funding.

Oregon arts were a 9.3 billion industry in 2021 (3.4% of state GDP), boosting Oregon's economy. Oregon has the fifth most people identifying as artists, 62,725 jobs (3.2% of our workforce.)

As the executive director of this facility, the four rivers cultural center, I saw the impact of arts and culture first hand, and over the course of 10 years 2011-2021, I saw our community's interest in the arts increase dramatically with significantly larger attendance and participation by our local citizenry, 80,000 a year in a micropolitan area of 35,000. Exposure generates interest. In our children's community theater program where as many as 160 kids would get a role in The Lion King or 101 Dalmatians, and 4200 area children we see a free show, I saw the undocumented migrant laborer's child having the identical experience as the over privileged Drs. child. Multi cultural exhibits for Japanese, Mexican, Basque and African Refugees brought people from all cultures together to enjoy and learn about each other. Seeing people of all cultures attend a Mexican Independence Day celebration or a forum on Japanese internment, or children participating in differently abled dance classes or baby ballet was extraordinary, and there became so many arts based reasons to come to this center.

The arts are transforming in so many ways tangible and intangible. They lighten our lives, spark our creativity and ground us. With the reputation for amazing natural beauty, progressive and enlightened values, sensitive land use and quality education, we should all want to see the arts flourish and continue to grow in our state,

especially in rural areas where artistic efforts are lacking. Every artist we help with funding will in turn help to transform each and every Oregonian.