

Cottage Theatre

May 3, 2023

Joint Committee on Ways and Means
State of Oregon

RE: Arts Recovery Fund Bill HB 2459

Dear Senator Steiner, Representative Sanchez and Committee Members:

I write to urge your support for HB 2459, to fund the Arts Recovery Fund. As you know, Oregon's Arts & Entertainment industry was among the first to be shut down in March 2020, and among the last to reopen. Cottage Theatre, located in the rural community of Cottage Grove, ended up fully closed for two years due to COVID and its auxiliary impacts. While we have reopened, and audiences are indeed returning to live theatre, the road to recovery is long.

Collectively, the Oregon arts and entertainment industry lost \$1.6 billion in revenue in 2021, and many organizations depleted their operating reserves completely just to survive long enough to reopen. All of us are facing dramatically increased operating costs (our cost for set materials has doubled since 2019, to give but one example), and reduced sources of support (for example, program advertising revenues from small businesses in our community have declined 30% as compared to pre-COVID levels.)

Investing in the arts makes good economic sense, as studies have shown that every dollar spent on arts and entertainment exerts a multiplier effect via spending on restaurants, lodging, travel, and more. Arts events act as tourism magnets, and tourism brings dollars into our state.

Finally, all of us in the theatre sector are deeply worried by the financial troubles facing Oregon Shakespeare Festival as a result of the pandemic. We are all in this together, and if that flagstaff institution shuts its doors, there will be negative ripple effects felt throughout our great state for years to come.

Please support HB2459 and help Oregon's cultural economy recover from the challenges of the last few years, so that we can continue to enrich the quality of life for all Oregonians in the years ahead. Thank you!

Sincerely,

Susan Goes

Susan Goes
Executive Director