



February 8, 2024

House Committee on Economic Development & Small Business  
900 Court Street NE  
Salem, OR 97301

Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Nguyen and Diehl, and members of the committee,

I am thrilled to weigh in and encourage your support for HB 4124. Arts and culture play a central role in the vibrancy of our communities. For this reason, I respectfully encourage you to support HB 4124. This legislation supports key cultural and arts institutions across Oregon, including multiple important organizations in Portland like the Oregon Symphony, Portland Art Museum, Portland Center Stage, Portland Opera and the Oregon Ballet Theater.

As economic development champions, we cannot underestimate the value that arts and culture bring to Oregon. A recently completed study by Americans for the Arts & Economic Prosperity showed that the more than 6,000 jobs and an upwards of \$800M in economic spending is generated by arts-related activities in Oregon. Of this, \$72 million flowed directly to local, state and federal government revenue and was generated in Multnomah County. The arts organizations in Portland alone accounted for \$400 million in spending by nonprofit arts and culture organizations about half of all spending statewide and \$4.5 million in event-related spending by their audiences. It is clear that arts and culture organizations and their audiences generate valuable economic activity and support for local businesses.

We understand that housing, homelessness, and addiction are top priorities this session, and they should be. But we must not overlook what will happen if we do not sustain our struggling arts and culture organizations and scene. Longtime arts organizations in Portland are continuing to close their doors. If we do not come together to bolster

these special organizations and the artists they support, we are going to lose some of the very fabric that make Portland and Oregon so special.

Finally, while many of us feel like the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic is behind us, for our arts organizations, it is still very real and present. Audiences have been slow to return to our venues, operating costs are rising, and pandemic era relief is coming to an end. Too many arts organizations, both small and large, are facing a financial cliff. At the City of Portland, we're working hard to help create a bridge to more stable ground, but we need the state to work with us to get there. We need more funding to our large arts organizations that carry the rhythm of Oregon's artistic heartbeat. And the Arts are primary activators of our evening and weekend economy.

The important investments included in HB 4124 will help sustain our arts and culture organizations, and in Portland, that will also help to revive and activate Portland's central city as a place for all Oregonians and our visitors to congregate, celebrate, shop, break bread and enjoy the vibrant culture our state offers. The small investments we currently make already show returns more than two-fold.

The Arts are the kindling that will ignite an economic recovery in Oregon. Not investing in the Arts today will negatively impact Oregon's bottom line next year, and the state will be forced to make more budget cuts to vital safety and livability services in the wake of a statewide fentanyl and housing crisis.

For these reasons and many more, please join Portland, and the chorus of individuals and organizations supporting HB 4124.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Ryan". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dan" being larger and more prominent than the last name "Ryan".

Dan Ryan  
Commissioner  
City of Portland