

Testimony of Anneliese Koehler, Legislative Affairs Manager
Testimony in Support of HB 4124
House Economic Development and Small Business
February 8, 2024



Metro is the elected regional government that serves nearly 1.7 million people in the 24 cities and three counties of the Portland metropolitan area. Among our various other responsibilities, we own and/or operate visitor venues of statewide and regional significance: the Oregon Convention Center, Oregon Zoo, Portland Expo Center and Portland's Centers for the Arts.

Metro supports House Bill 4124 which invests a critical lifeline for Oregon's cultural and event organizations.

The last four years have been particularly challenging for arts and culture organizations in the Portland Metro region. The pandemic, slow recovery and continued issues facing downtown have resulted in audience members being reticent to return. While some popular shows like Broadway, certain comedy and concerts are returning to pre-pandemic levels, attendance remains down for many other shows.

We know that our experience and situation is mirrored in cultural and event institutions across our region and our state. Additional assistance is needed to ensure that our state does not lose the cultural and event cornerstones in our communities. In addition to the critical role they play in provoking important conversations, understanding humanity and providing entertainment, these institutions also play a pivotal role in driving economic growth in our local communities. Attendees often go out to dinner, grab drinks or dessert, and spend additional money in the local economy. Some shows and performances will bring in out-of-town visitors who stay in hotels and make a weekend of it, buying souvenirs and frequenting local stores.

Metro urges the Legislature to pass House Bill 4124 and provide critical support for our cultural and event organizations.