



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

To: Members of the House Committee On Economic Development and Small Business

Date: February 8, 2024

Subject: Support HB 4124

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

My name is Dr. Maxine Dexter and I am honored to be the State Representative for House District 33, which includes NW & Downtown Portland, Linnton, and Cathedral Park. I am grateful for this opportunity today to share my strong support for HB 4124 which will make crucial investments into cultural institutions across Oregon that are still suffering from the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This \$27 million appropriation will revitalize organizations across Oregon that enrich the lives of people young and old, stimulate the economy, and continue to celebrate the history and creativity of Oregon. These institutions help us see ourselves in our community while also opening our eyes to the culture and history of people in our community much more broadly than we would otherwise encounter. The preservation of our historical institutions and landmarks help us create understanding and educate generations of Oregonians on the accomplishments and mistakes of our past.

Crucially, artistic and cultural organizations are powerful drivers of economic growth. While industries like tourism are still recovering from COVID-19, artistic festivals like the Oregon Shakespeare Festival can draw crowds that make a lasting difference in the economic vitality of local businesses. As one of the largest economic contributors in Ashland¹, the OSF being shuttered during COVID-19 was devastating, and HB 4124's investment to OSF would help preserve this cultural icon in our state as well as maintain its significant benefits for the region.

More holistically, the arts are a powerful driver of understanding, change, enhanced community, and creativity. HB 4124 supports a broad range of organizations from theaters to historical societies and parks. Providing these organizations with an economic boost ensures people continue to be exposed to thought-provoking productions, historical and cultural information, and outdoor excursions. Additionally, these organizations are often community hubs where people can find social connections and reconnect with cultural roots. Those who have access to artistic and cultural activities are more involved in their community and have a stronger sense of belonging.²

¹<https://ktvl.com/news/ripple-effect/ripple-effect-oregon-shakespeare-festival-financially-struggling-with-covid-restrictions>

² <https://knightfoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/Community-Ties-Final-pg.pdf>

MAXINE E. DEXTER, MD
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
DISTRICT 33



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

My district is home to several of these organizations, including Portland Center Stage, Oregon Symphony, Portland Art Museum, and the PAM CUT // Center for an Untold Tomorrow. These cultural institutions are known and loved throughout the Pacific Northwest. I urge the committee to pass HB 4124 to keep our cultural institutions thriving for decades to come. Oregon deserves artistic centers and museums to honor its rich heritage.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Maxine Dexter", written in a cursive style.

Representative Maxine Dexter, M.D.

House District 33 (Northwest and Downtown Portland, Linnton, and Cathedral Park)