

REPRESENTATIVE ANNESSA HARTMAN (SHE/HER)
HOUSE DISTRICT 40



OREGON HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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

I support HB 4124, not because I am a mother of a young aspiring vocalist and thespian or because I am a previous employee of the beloved Portland Center Stage. I support HB 4124 because of the outsized effect the arts have on local communities, and the significant loss to our state will feel if we lose them.

Last year, the Legislature's decision to fund only two of the 16 recommended CREF projects marked a significant departure from a decade of full funding. This reduction has left our arts and culture network in a precarious position, exacerbating the vulnerabilities exposed by the pandemic and undermining the sector's contributions to our state's economy and social fabric.

Economic Impact of Arts and Culture

The arts and culture sector is a profound economic driver. According to a study by Americans for the Arts, the sector generated \$829.3 million in economic activity in 2022 alone, supporting 13,061 jobs and generating \$155.3 million in tax revenue for local, state, and federal governments. The multiplier effect of arts is evident, with every \$1 spent on arts and culture typically leading to \$3 or \$4 spent in the local economy.

For example, I had the privilege of being the Events and Catering Manager at Portland Center Stage. We had a team of about 10-20 who all were paid a living wage and provided benefits. On the flip side, PCS also brings in dollars for surrounding businesses like Deschutes Brewing, which can see an increase of about 80% in sales on show nights. Those are two small but big impact examples of why simply providing this funding to these organizations can have a much larger impact.

Tourism and Local Economy

Arts and culture institutions also drive tourism and support local businesses. One-third of attendees at arts and culture events come from outside the county, spending an average of \$60.57 each—more than twice that of local attendees. For 77% of these nonlocal visitors, cultural events are the primary motivation for their visit, underscoring the sector's importance in attracting tourism and the associated economic benefits.

In regions like southern Oregon, the impact is even more pronounced. The Britt Music & Arts Festival and the Oregon Shakespeare Festival are lifelines for local economies, with the former

contributing to 80% of Jacksonville's annual restaurant revenue and the latter driving an estimated \$120 million to the local economy.

The Crisis and the Need for HB 4124

Unfortunately, the pandemic disproportionately affected Oregon's arts institutions, with extended closures inflicting severe financial and operational damage. The ban on large gatherings left arts and entertainment venues shuttered for 18 months, a blow from which many are still struggling to recover.

HB 4124 represents a crucial step toward recovery and resilience. By funding the remaining 14 projects on the Cultural Resources Economic Fund (CREF) slate with a one-time investment of \$27 million, we not only safeguard the jobs and healthcare of thousands employed by the sector but also bolster the economic health and social fabric of our communities. We must ensure that the arts continue to thrive in Oregon, enriching our lives and supporting our economy for generations to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Annessa Hartman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Representative Annessa Hartman
House District 40 – Gladstone, Oregon City, North Clackamas County