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February 12, 2024

Oregon Legislature
Senate Committee on Labor and Business
Salem, Oregon

RE: SB 1582

Dear Chair Taylor and Committee Members,

On behalf of over 300 nonprofit cultural providers across Oregon, **we urge you to expeditiously pass SB 1582 to complete funding of the 2023 capital projects slate proposed for the Cultural Resources Economic Fund.** The original slate contained 16 projects and two Portland-area projects were funded in the 2023 session, leaving 14 statewide projects uncompleted. We urge you to correct this critical situation and support these important projects which will contribute deeply to Oregon’s economic and human fabric.

Policymakers established CREF over a decade ago and asked CACO to assist in overseeing a statewide process to bring forward those projects ready for state investment. The unfunded projects in 2023 total \$7.8 million and represent rural, community projects in Astoria, Grants Pass, Eugene, John Day, Bend, Rainer, Medford, and Cave Junction, Oregon. This slate is the outcome of a respected peer-review process that examines each proposal with economic, financial, and technical criteria, and an assessment of community support. We can attest that these projects are not only ready for state funding but important to our state’s future.

SB 1582 also includes important “resiliency” funding for our sector which was among those hardest hit by the global pandemic. Federal funding largely kept nonprofits afloat during COVID and it’s time for the state to contribute as well to help the sector pivot to new deliveries and new works. Audiences are returning at a slow rate. The sector is pivoting to attracting new participants and with a well-timed infusion of state funds, we feel confident not only in survival but resiliency for our major arts and culture providers. In 2023 policymakers only recognized the dire impact of the pandemic on live venues – largely the for-profit providers -- who have different financial levers to pull from the nonprofit providers. This was inequitable and incomplete.

Our proposal recognizes that Oregon’s “anchor” arts institutions bear a disproportionate amount of economic downturn because of their size and scale. House bill 4124 provides \$5.6 m. for the anchor arts groups, approximately the same amount that was previously dedicated to live venues. We also propose a statewide grant fund of \$14 m. for the remainder of the sector that did not receive funding from the 2023 legislature. **We urge your strong support for the creative sector through passage of SB 1582!**

Sincerely,

J.S. May, Chairman