

April 3, 2025

Senator Kate Lieber, Co-Chair
Representative Tawna Sanchez, Co-Chair
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Oregon Legislature
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: Support for High Desert Museum's Capital Construction Project

Dear Co-Chairs Lieber and Sanchez and Committee Members:

I'm pleased to express my strong support for the High Desert Museum's \$2 million Cultural Resource Economic Fund award request included in HB 3191, which is in the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. The High Desert Museum is a vital educational resource, a regional arts anchor, and a powerful economic driver, and the award will help fund an expansion to benefit all of Central and Eastern Oregon for generations to come.

The Museum has raised over \$30.5 million—76% of a \$40 million goal—for its first major expansion in nearly three decades. This project will add a state-of-the-art Learning Center to meet intense demand for the Museum's K-12 programs; a dedicated art gallery, the only of its kind within 130 miles; the High Desert Hall to provide a home for the Museum's many events and programs; and the renovation of the permanent exhibition dedicated to the Indigenous cultures of the High Desert Plateau, co-created with Native partners. The sum comes from private individuals, federal agencies and foundations.

For 43 years, the Museum has created awe-inspiring experiences that meaningfully connect broad audiences to the art, cultures, history and ecology of the High Desert. Today, this nationally recognized museum serves nearly 225,000 visitors annually and is the largest arts and culture institution on the east side of the Cascades. It exercises sound, strategic fiscal management, with a balanced budget for over a decade that is now at roughly \$8 million annually.

Investing \$2 million included in HB 3191 or in HB 5006 would provide essential funding for the Museum to complete this expansion and continue serving a fast-growing, dynamic region. I strongly urge you to support this investment in the future of the High Desert Museum and in arts and culture in Oregon.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nelson Mathews", with a long, sweeping underline.

Nelson Mathews, Trustee, High Desert Museum
2428 NW 1st Street, Bend OR 97703