

Submitter: Javier Dubon
On Behalf Of: Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure, Appointment or Topic: 2026 Agency Reduction Options
Chair, Co-Chairs, and Members of the Ways and Means Committee,

My name is Javier Dubon, and I serve as Interim Executive Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival in Ashland.

I am writing in strong support of releasing the full state funding previously approved for OSF under House Bill 5006: the \$2.5 million one-time operating appropriation for the 2025 season and the \$375,000 capital grant through the Cultural Resource Economic Fund for the renovation of the Black Swan Theatre.

I want to begin by expressing sincere gratitude to the Legislature for its support of OSF during an extraordinarily challenging period. These investments have been practical, strategic, and stabilizing. They allowed the Festival to take difficult but necessary steps toward recovery after the pandemic and years of structural disruption in our sector.

Over the past year, OSF has made hard decisions to right-size operations, refocus our programming, and rebuild trust with audiences, artists, donors, and the community. We have been disciplined in our planning, conservative in our assumptions, and intentional about aligning our work with long-term sustainability. While we've made an incredible amount of progress as evident by a 42% increase in ticket sales last year, we still have a long way to go. Legislative support has played a meaningful role in our progress, and the funds approved through HB 5006 were incorporated into our planning with care and restraint.

Withholding even 10 percent would still have consequences. These allocations were approved to help stabilize operations and advance critical capital improvements at a pivotal moment in OSF's recovery. Any reduction now would undermine the very goals the Legislature sought to achieve. The operating appropriation supports a statewide economic engine. OSF is the largest professional theatre in Oregon and one of the oldest nonprofit theatres in the country. More than 80 percent of our audience travels over 100 miles to attend performances, driving overnight stays, dining, and spending throughout Southern Oregon. Prior to the pandemic, OSF generated more than \$120 million annually in economic impact and currently supports nearly 500 jobs, making us one of the largest employers in Ashland.

The Black Swan Theatre renovation is equally critical. The Black Swan could play a vital role in artistic programming, education initiatives, rentals, and community use

which would result in increases visitors. This capital investment will preserve an essential cultural asset in downtown Ashland, generate construction jobs, and strengthen OSF's capacity to serve audiences for decades to come. Capital funding of this kind produces long-term returns, not only for OSF, but for the region as a whole.

OSF's success reflects on Oregon. A thriving Oregon Shakespeare Festival signals that this state values cultural infrastructure, tourism, creative jobs, and access to world-class arts. The investments approved through HB 5006 recognize that reality and releasing them in full is essential to ensuring those investments deliver their intended impact.

I respectfully urge the Committee to release both the \$2.5 million operating appropriation and the \$375,000 capital grant in full. OSF has demonstrated fiscal discipline, resilience, and a clear path forward. With the Legislature's continued support, the Festival can continue contributing meaningfully to Oregon's economy, workforce, and cultural life.

Thank you for your time, your consideration, and your ongoing commitment to Oregon's arts and communities.

Respectfully,
Javi Dubon
Interim Executive Director
Oregon Shakespeare Festival