



Testimony provided by Karie Burch on February 14, 2020

RE: Improve access to the Portland Art Museum for all Oregonians

My name is Karie Burch and I serve as the Director of Development for the Portland Art Museum. It is a sincere privilege to speak with you today.

The Portland Art Museum is seeking \$1 million in state funding for our capital project that will connect and transform the Museum's campus. The state's overall funding – including \$1 million granted in 2017 and \$1 million in 2020 – would reflect 2% of the total campaign. With over \$40 million left to raise towards our \$100 million goal, the state's additional backing will undoubtedly help us leverage additional private philanthropy. Notably, the Cultural Advocacy Coalition has also endorsed that this project merits additional state investment by the Legislature during the 2020 short session.

Founded in 1892 and the seventh oldest art museum in our country, the Portland Art Museum currently serves over 450,000 people each year. That is more than any other arts institution in our state. Of those visitors, one third attend for free or at a reduced rate. Our exhibitions and programming seek to impact the lives of Oregonians by inspiring creativity, conversation, and connection.

For example, a local public high school teacher recently brought his classroom in for a free tour of the *Hank Willis Thomas: All Things Being Equal* exhibition. Reflecting on their visit, he wrote, "I overheard so many thoughtful conversations and wonderful interpretations. And the students kept the conversation going back at school. This was many students first time to downtown Portland, let alone an art museum. Thank you for inspiring these young minds."

Despite our increasing impact, most people find themselves lost in the Museum, struggling to find their way around. We estimate that half of our visitors never find their way through the underground link to the north wing of the Museum - and finding the accessible entrances to our historic buildings is almost impossible.

A recent first-time visitor shared with us that she and her husband circled around the Museum multiple times before she finally located the accessibility ramp. While she loves art and enjoyed her time at the Museum, she said she would likely not return.

This campaign will solve all of those problems and allow us to connect the Museum's two historic buildings across all four floors with a welcoming glass pavilion. The State was an early investor in 2017. Since then, the Museum went through an extensive community feedback phase, including an ADA audit and three Design Advice Reviews with the City of Portland's Historic Landmarks Commission. This important phase brought accessibility to the forefront of our plans. Specific improvements include new elevators, accessible ramps and restrooms, and an outdoor community passageway. Today's improved project integrates universal design principles throughout the campus to ensure that all people, regardless of their individual capabilities, will enjoy ease of access throughout the Museum's art exhibitions and programmatic spaces. These necessary improvements also led to increased project costs.

Thank you for being an early investor in this project and for the opportunity to speak to you today. We greatly appreciate your consideration of a \$1 million grant in support of our project to improve access to the Portland Art Museum for all Oregonians.

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