

My name is John Gear, I have been a devoted fan of Salem Cinema since 2007. I write to urge you to support HB 3376 and the grants to movie theaters such as Salem Cinema, which have been absolutely hammered by the necessary response to COVID.

The proposed grants are vital if we are going to save independent movie theaters, which are essential cultural resources. The big movie chains have Wall St. funding and that operate as money pumps, suctioning money out of our community and sending it to investors. Independent theaters like Salem Cinema, on the other hand, are part of the community and contribute to its well-being in myriad ways -- not only do local theaters provide some employment, but they are powerful community allies and advocates. Salem Cinema alone has probably helped more community groups raise funds and awareness for important issues than all the big chains put together in Oregon. And local theater owners shop locally and help support the local business community they serve -- they are part of the community, not an outsider to it simply profiting from it.

COVID has caused a river of money to flow to many small businesses and even some arts organizations; but movie theaters have been left "in the dark" as it were - with nothing. HB 3376 helps keep vital cultural institutions like Salem Cinema alive and it's the very least you should do.