

April 17, 2021

Dear Esteemed Members of the Ways and Means committee:

Thank you for taking the time to hear from your constituents. My name is Dana Whitelaw. I'm the Executive Director of the High Desert Museum in Bend and also a board member of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition (CAC).

The CAC represents nearly 400 cultural organizations across the state from all-volunteer community groups, to Tribes, to large theaters and museums. And we have struggled during the pandemic.

Today we are asking for you to support eleven capital projects that are cornerstones in their communities and in our state. The CAC evaluated over 40 projects for their readiness, community support, contributions to economic development, and preservation and/or creation of cultural assets. Using our commitments to equity and inclusion as well, we narrowed down this group to 11 projects totaling \$9.5 million. That's what we're asking for you to support.

From Baker City to North Bend, from Newberg to Astoria, from Joseph to Siletz, from Portland to Eugene, these projects represent shovel ready investments that will accelerate our recovery as a state. We have a diligent and thorough process to select these projects. Then the eleven groups advocate for the collective slate of projects together—which. Is unusual and powerful. Then the 11 groups advocate for the slate TOGETHER— this is unusual and powerful.

I also want to make you aware of some significant challenges for museums pertaining to the recent federal funding opportunity that became available—the Shattered Venue Operators Grant. Museums are eligible for this funding but only if they have fixed seating. This requirement will eliminate most smaller and most rural museums. We simply don't have the space and attendance numbers that are required to make a fixed seating business model work. I bring this to your attention as Oregon has been a leader during the pandemic in designating funding for our arts and culture sector—and the state's cultural landscape is still at risk.

We will need your support to emerge from the pandemic in a viable position.

Thank you for investing in Oregon's cultural future and working hard for us.

Sincerely,

Dana Whitelaw