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TO: Joint Committee on Ways and Means  
RE: SB 5555

Co-Chairs Sen. Johnson, Sen. Steiner-Hayward, and Rep. Rayfield, and members of the joint committee:

I am writing to urge you to include HB 3376 in SB 5555.

I have lived in Oregon for 54 years. I taught at Willamette University for 47 of those years. I began teaching courses in film studies in 1972 and eventually I started a major in film studies there. Films have been an important part of my personal and professional life for decades.

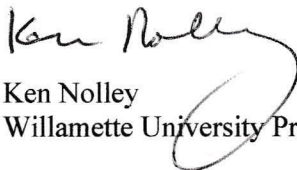
I first became seriously interested in film as an undergraduate in college in Santa Barbara CA. If it had not been for the programming offered by the local independent venue there—the Riviera Theater—I would not have discovered the magic of international cinema. When I was in graduate school and during the early years of my teaching, all movies had to be seen on movie screens, and I am deeply grateful for the offerings of the old Hollywood Theater in Salem, several small theaters in Eugene, Cinema 21 and the Hollywood Theater in Portland, and many more. In the years after the Hollywood Theater in Salem was razed, Salem Cinema became a vital part of my life and the life of the Salem community.

Still today, even with streaming easily available, the large screens and shared space of independent movie theaters play a critical role in Oregon communities, allowing people to come together and share the experience of the best and most satisfying new films. We often meet to eat together before a screening, and many screenings are followed by animated discussions over coffee or drinks in local venues. Simply put, independent theaters are a critical part of the cultural life of our Oregon communities.

But local theaters have been hard pressed by the pandemic. Closed for months with ongoing expenses and no income, theaters have struggled to hang on until things open up again. Though they are open now, they must run on a fraction of the revenue they need to maintain healthy distancing for their audiences. Undoubtedly you will have heard about these enormous challenges from the theater owners themselves.

I am writing to say that the communities they serve need them to survive as well. They help to create and stimulate the shared social life of their communities, just as they play an important part in local economies. Please support this bill. It is critical to the life of these vital local institutions

Sincerely,



Ken Nolley  
Willamette University Professor Emeritus of English and Film Studies