



Submitter: Laura Matzer  
On Behalf Of: Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum  
Committee: House Committee on Economic Recovery and Prosperity  
Measure: HB4040

As Columbia Gorge Discovery Center & Museum (CGDCM) celebrates our 25th Anniversary this year, we would welcome additional grant support resulting from HB4040, to bring our operations back in line with community and tourism expectations of the region. CGDCM is an anchor non-profit business in the Gorge, providing jobs, generating revenue in tourism to the area, and supporting local businesses that keep CGDCM's day-to-day operations running.

CGDCM is the official interpretive center for the Columbia Gorge National Scenic Area. The mission of CGDCM is to inspire appreciation and stewardship of the Columbia River Gorge and Wasco County through collection, preservation, and interpretation of cultural and natural history resources. Venues like ours create community through our programs and amenities, draw tourists to the region – which, in turn, support local businesses, and provide a rich, informal learning environment to lifelong learners.

For CGDCM, 2020 and 2021 were atypical due to the Covid-19 pandemic, and impacts were significant:

- All staff were laid off all staff in early April 2020
- The final payroll before layoffs was met through a loan of \$33,300 from Wasco County Historical Museum Press
- With Payroll Protection Program funding and other federally sourced grant funding channeled through Oregon Cultural Trust, staff were back on the payroll on October 1, 2020 and CGDCM reopened seven days a week
- In November, the health department shut down our sector; we remained closed to the public until Feb. 18, 2021
- Not until May of 2021 did cruise ship traffic return to the Columbia River, which is a significant source of admission fees / visitation / gift shop sales for CGDCM
- State regulations forbidding gatherings, as well as public fear of infection, continue to dramatically impact facility rental bookings
- In 2019, the number of students served, preschool to college, was 2,359; in 2021 was less than 10% of that: 219
- The shift to online learning by schools and the ebb and flow of state-ordered community-wide shutdowns contributed to the extremely low number of school visits
- When schools returned to in-person teaching, the difficulty in finding bus drivers prevented field trips, and ongoing changing safety guidelines for in-person events discouraged student visits

We greatly appreciate federal funding support that has kept CGDCM's doors open and our staff employed. However, as we continue to navigate through challenging economic times, state financial support as proposed in HB4040 would help us economically recover after such difficult operational years. With a remarkable 25 years of building community and drawing sustained tourism to the region, we remain committed, as ever, to thriving as a cultural resource for the region, its communities, for the state, and the country.

Thank you, and with best wishes,

Laura Matzer  
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