



543 SW Maplecrest Ct
Portland, OR 97219
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7 February 2022

Dear Representative John Lively and House Committee of Economic Recovery and Prosperity,

My name is Katharine Lawrence and I serve on the board of The Old Church (TOC), a not-for-profit concert hall and historic landmark in Portland. Our mission is two-fold: to preserve and maintain the 1882 structure, and to produce and present programs that reflect and enhance the cultural life of the community. Having a beautiful building with world-class acoustics allows us to host cultural events; revenue from those events allows us to maintain the building and bring the arts to the community. Since the onset of Covid, we have been unable to uphold our mission.

I urge you on behalf of TOC and Oregon's cultural organizations, all hit hard by the pandemic, to please support the passage of HB 4040.

Why?

Just when TOC was expecting its most successful year ever, Covid shut us down. Funding that we so gratefully received allowed us to stay in business and finally mount a herculean effort to reopen last fall — we needed to provide a safe environment to staff, audiences, and performers, and hire and train staff. Expenses had skyrocketed, and simply finding new staff was very challenging, much less paying significantly increased wages. We were finding our footing again when Omicron knocked out a full calendar of events in January; desperate to keep our hard-earned staff and do the right thing, we paid 80% of what they would have earned during that busy month. And now it's February and we see a long road to recovery ahead.

TOC supports our economy by providing jobs and events that draw people to area restaurants and hotels. This activity makes for a vital (and safer) downtown. TOC is home to many arts organizations, our audiences are diverse in all ways, we offer free events to the community, and we work closely with other arts venues. We see the value of arts and culture firsthand.

I've served on the board for many years and my father did before me. Over the last 54 years, patrons and donors have supported the building's restoration from dire condition, attended concerts and other events, and made memories here. We owe it to this community to come back strong, along with the state's other wonderful cultural institutions.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Katharine Lawrence". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Katharine
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