



**DT:** January 25, 2023

**To:** House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business

*Chair* – Rep. Janelle Bynum

*Vice Chairs* – Rep. Lily Morgan & Rep Daniel Nguyen

*Members* – Rep. Ed Diehl, Rep Lucetta Elmer, Rep. Cyrus Javadi, Rep. John Lively, Rep. Virgle Osborne, Rep. Hai Pham, Rep. Ricki Ruiz, & Rep. Jules Walters

**FM:** JS May, Executive Director Artists Repertory Theatre & Chair of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon

**Re: Support for HB 2459 - \$50 million in Recovery Funding for the Arts and Culture Sector**

Thank you for the support by the Oregon Legislature for the arts and culture sector during the pandemic. Without this support, many of Oregon’s cultural gems would simply have not survived. As is typical with most disasters, the disaster itself is about one third of the total problem, and the recovery period is the other two thirds. Recovery for this sector, which deeply impacts Oregon’s important food, beverage and lodging industries will take up to five-years. It is important to note that the average cultural attendee spends approximately \$50 on other goods and services beyond tickets. Patrons and attendees have been slow to return to in person performances impacting our downtowns, and performances have been cancelled as COVID variants have infected cast and crew, even with vaccinations and masking still in place. ART is currently seeing audiences at approximately 40% to 50% of pre-pandemic levels. Due to these earned income losses, we are projecting a 25% deficit this year. As all governmental support has been used, next fiscal year looks more daunting.

Oregon has already lost the Portland Children’s Museum, a 75 years-old cultural landmark. It would be a shame if the dollars already invested by the state were essentially wasted because organizations are not able to survive to recover.

I will end with good news. In 2016 ART provided a finishing commission for *The Thanksgiving Play*, a satirical comedy, by Larissa FastHorse (Sicangu Lakota). In 2018 it was a world premiere at ART. In 2019 it became one of the 10 most produced plays in America, was produced off-Broadway, and in 2020 FastHorse was named a *MacArthur Genius*. In 2023 *The Thanksgiving Play* opens on Broadway and FastHorse will be its first woman Native American playwright. I know of many other examples of other Oregon cultural institutions that are changing our state, our country and our world, please help us continue to do this important work.