



January 30, 2023

House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business

Dear Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee:

I am the executive director of Lan Su Chinese Garden and a member of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon. I'm writing today to ask you to support House Bill 2459, which invests \$50 million in relief and recovery funding to arts and culture organizations across our state.

While Lan Su is not specifically identified as a recipient of these funds, I believe our organization would qualify for a grant through the \$29 million allocated to county cultural coalitions awarded to local arts and cultural organizations who demonstrate value and need.

This has been an extremely challenging time for Lan Su. In addition to the shutdowns that occurred during the height of the pandemic, we have been severely affected by the humanitarian crisis manifesting in our Old Town/Chinatown Neighborhood.

While we have worked hard and have successfully brought people together for cultural events, our overall attendance remains 32% lower than pre-pandemic levels. Our organization's operating revenues are relatively flat while our operating costs are up 21% primarily driven by increases in labor, contracting, and utilities expenses. Due to significant public safety issues, today we are spending close to \$250,000 a year for security personnel, an expense that was not needed in our budget just three years ago.

Despite these challenges, Lan Su remains committed to producing events and cultivating space where audiences gain a better understanding of other cultures. We are supporting local Asian American/Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander (AANHPI) artists and we are growing a strong community of support with more than 200 AANHPI program partners and more than 140 volunteers.

We have also dedicated ourselves to being a good neighbor, committed to making one of Portland's oldest and most culturally diverse neighborhoods safe and welcoming for all. Chair Bynum and Members of the Committee, I know there are some who may think a state investment in arts and culture is a luxury. I disagree and hope you do as well. HB 2459 is an investment in the heart of who we are, our communities and in the Oregon we want to be.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Elizabeth Nye'.

Elizabeth Nye