



January 31, 2023

Dear House Committee on Economic Development And Small Business,

We support House Bill 2459 to allocate critical funds in economic support for Hillsboro arts & culture venues. Five Oaks Museum, like all organizations, has been severely impacted in having to close our building for the last 3 years. We are grateful for the state COVID relief resources that helped us through 2020 and 2021. With those allocations, we paid 100% of staff wages with full health benefits. It gave us a boost to pivot and serve our audiences in digital formats, including 3 full digital exhibitions with robust virtual programming. We now face a number of obstacles in reopening to the public in 2023 and need continued funding to serve our community in-person.

For the past 65 years, Five Oaks Museum has been a space for the community to visit and learn about our shared history. We are a vital venue for students in the Beaverton and Hillsboro School districts, along with various outlying schools. Our field trips provide an experience for school aged visitors to understand community connections and see their wider world through how history shapes us. We provide educators with support in fulfilling Senate Bill (SB) 13, Tribal History/Shared History, an important bill to include Oregon's Native sovereignty and culture and celebrate Native voices. While we shifted to virtual programming and digital learning materials during the pandemic to fill a dire need in the region's education system, we now need to reopen with a new in-person exhibition to give a richer experience in space together.

For the time our building was closed, we were unable to secure grant funding to offset the cost of guided field trips and transportation reimbursement, which we were able to provide in 2019. Due to our limited resources now, we are unable to support reopening all of our usual learning offerings at one time so we reached out to area educators with a survey asking the greatest needs and the difficulties they face in accessing educational offerings for their students. We received 72 responses. The breakdown gave us specific information:

- 63% of teachers indicated that the field trip option was the most desirable learning offering. Teachers indicated a strong preference for an in-person experience for students.
- 82% indicated the field trip/presentation fee was a barrier (47% indicated a "significant barrier" and 35% indicated "somewhat of a barrier")

- 63% shared that transportation was a barrier (36% as “significant barrier” and 26% “somewhat of a barrier”)

We KNOW people want to come, but nonprofits rely on data in pursuing private funding, especially funds allocated to providing access, and that will take time to document and rebuild our resources to offer to schools that cannot come without it.

Without direct economic help, arts & culture nonprofits face specific “back to square one” challenges to rebuild foundational stability in funding. At Five Oaks Museum, we face rebuilding visitorship/membership after a decline of 76%, substantial upfront costs to build an in-person exhibition to reopen, serving ALL students, a scarcity in fundraising efforts due to the economy, and a reduction in immediate funds to support new programming—all directly related to the aftermath of the pandemic. These are the kinds of specifics that actively prevent recovery and require time and strategic, planned financial support to develop long-term stability.

Our community commitment is to visitors of all ages and access, artists, storytellers, and uplifting community voices. Please join us in that dedication for all the reasons arts and culture organizations contribute value to those they serve.

Sincerely,

Rachel Brumit
Director of Community Connections

www.fiveoaksmuseum.org / info@fiveoaksmuseum.org / (503) 645-5353

Mailing Address: 3300 NW 185th Ave, Suite260, Portland OR, 97229

At PCC Rock Creek / 17677 NW Springville Rd, Portland OR, 97229 / on Kalapuyan land

Body | Land | Truth | Justice | Community