



EUGENE SYMPHONY

FRANCESCO LECCE-CHONG
Music Director & Conductor

SCOTT FRECK
Executive Director

February 14, 2023

The Honorable Dacia Grayber
Chair, House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans
Oregon State Legislature
Salem, Oregon 974301

Dear Chair Grayber and Committee Members:

If passed, House Bill 2498 would fulfill the promise made by the Oregon Legislature to the Oregon Cultural Trust (hereinafter Trust) by dedicating \$200 million in lottery bonding capacity to the corpus of the Trust. The eventual earnings can be distributed statewide through grants to those nonprofits that qualify for Trust or Oregon Arts Commission funding – of which there are more than 1,600 to date.

This program, the Cultural Impact Program (CIP), could also be known as the Cultural Promise as the original concept of this unique-to-the nation program were to come from the sale of public lands which, more than two decades later, has not yet been achieved. Because this visionary idea has not been funded as intended, the Trust's corpus of roughly \$30 million, while important and impressive based on donations and Oregonians' use of the Trust's tax credit, is just a fraction of the original intended total – just 15% – and yet as I testified before the House Revenue Committee in 2019, it is the only thing that keeps Oregon from being 49th out of 50 states in terms of arts and cultural funding.

For a wide variety of well-documented reasons — the power of the creative sector to heal and unify us, its significant economic impacts, its incalculable ability to shine a light on the pursuit of lasting social justice — Oregonians need to see the original promise fulfilled. Oregon has experienced some of the longest pandemic-related shutdowns of anywhere in the nation, and our arts and culture sector has been and continues to be heavily affected.

At Eugene Symphony, the pandemic forced a suspension of all performances and ticket sales for 2020/21, thus eliminating a major source of revenue. In our current 2022/23 Season, we continue to see a gradual increase in sales numbers, but which are still lower than pre-pandemic levels. Although our doors may be open and masks no longer required, we see audience members hesitant to return to the performance hall.

Recovery money from House Bill 2498 would provide support through vital grants from OCT for the Symphony.
Examples of past funded projects include:

- *Private Lesson Program*, which serves 44 students in Eugene. 20 of those students receive scholarships dedicated to BIPOC youth in thanks to our partnership with Eugene-Springfield NAACP Branch #1116;
- *Encouraging Young Musicians to Achieve (EYMA)*, which sends musicians into under-resourced schools in local (and often rural) school districts for personalized instructions to those who would not have access otherwise.

Eugene Symphony is only one example out of the many organizations within the arts & cultural sector in Oregon that continually receives funding from OCT to provide enriching programs for our communities. HB 2498 asks for \$200 million in funds to support the corpus of OCT. This session lottery bonding capacity is at an unusual high point – the timing has never been better to fulfill this promise.

Today, on Oregon's 164th birthday, I urge you to vote to approve HB 2498 in your coming committee meetings and support its passage throughout the legislative process. Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Freck
Executive Director

ENRICHING LIVES THROUGH THE POWER OF MUSIC