



February 14, 2023

House Committee on Emergency Management, General Government, and Veterans

Dear Chair Grayber and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for your service to the state and for scheduling House Bill 2498 for a hearing. The Portland Art Museum joins artists and arts organizations across Oregon in support of this legislation that fulfills the promise of the Oregon Cultural Trust to provide meaningful and sustainable funding for arts and culture.

House Bill 2498 creates a Cultural Impact Program as part of the Oregon Cultural Trust. It directs the sale of \$200 million of Lottery bonds, dispersing the interest and earnings from those funds to cultural and tribal organizations across Oregon. This legislation comes to you with the full endorsement of the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon, as well as many others who deeply believe that arts and culture are essential to our state's emotional as well as economic well-being.

As the oldest museum in the Pacific Northwest, the Portland Art Museum is the steward of more than 50,000 works of art from across time and culture, with special collections of Northwest Art, Native American Art, and Asian Art, among others. The Native American collection alone, known for both its depth and diversity, consists of 3,500 prehistoric and historic objects created by some 200 cultural groups from throughout North America. Through exhibitions and programs that bring the world to Oregon and Oregon to the world, the Museum reaches 450,000 people annually. We prioritize access, community partnerships, and artist services across our programs. The Museum has eliminated admission fees for youth, school groups, and, on select days, the general public. As a result, one out of every three visitors receive access for free or a reduced fee, including 60,000 youth and students each year.

As the largest art museum in the state, the Portland Art Museum has a \$21 million operating budget and employs 155 staff, yet we receive an average of \$50,000 annually from the Oregon Cultural Trust and Oregon Arts Commission combined due to their limited funding. In 2018, the Association of Art Museum Directors shared a series of fiscal benchmarks for thriving art museums including the baseline statistic that, on average, art museums across the country receive 2% of their annual operating budget from their state. The Portland Art Museum falls well below this average, receiving just 0.2 percent of its operating budget from the State of Oregon annually.

This bill will create a mechanism for more meaningful and sustainable funding from our state that will be a catalyst for tourism and economic development, as well as a stabilizing component for cultural organizations across Oregon. Before the pandemic, cultural nonprofits and their audiences spent more than \$330.4 million annually in the Portland Metro alone—10x the national median spending per metropolitan area. With additional state support, our Museum, along with the many cultural nonprofits in Downtown Portland and across the state, can be a responsive, agile, and adaptable partner in revitalizing our region.

We believe that House Bill 2498 will provide the critical funding that's needed to create lasting investment in Oregon's future.

Sincerely,

Brian Ferriso  
Director  
Chief Curator

Karie Burch  
Director of Development, Portland Art Museum  
Trustee, Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon