

Amanda Stark, Creative Advisor and Advocate for the Arts

House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business Testimony

Submitted on behalf of HB2459

Re: Support for HB2459

Dear Chair Bynum and Committee Members,

I am writing to support the passage of HB2459. Thank you for the continued support and efforts that the Oregon State Legislature has made on behalf of the arts and culture sector since the onset of the pandemic. Without the CARES funding it is certain that most of the independent venues and arts organizations would not have survived to this point.

As a board member of the Independent Venue Coalition, longtime music industry professional, and past executive director of The Old Church Concert Hall from 2010 to 2022, I have been engaged with advocacy efforts to save Oregon's music and arts sector since the pandemic closures. Our music and arts industry ground to a halt for almost 2 years. The numbers tell the story. Recovering from any disaster is painstaking and while there are positive signs that our industry is rallying, it will take additional funding to bolster continuing efforts to recover from the devastating impacts of the pandemic.

When humanity comes together to celebrate art in its many forms, we build a better and more joyful world. These experiences allow us to transcend our differences and give our lives deeper meaning. The arts industry is one of Oregon's most precious resources and is worth every ounce of effort to save. Arts and culture undeniably contribute to the safety and economic wellbeing of our communities and neighborhoods. When our arts and culture languish, people leave, and neighborhoods and economies deteriorate. Without additional government support to help bolster recovery efforts it is inevitable that we will lose integral elements of this beloved ecosystem.

Oregon won me over with its natural beauty and pioneering DIY arts scene in the early 1990's. We have all invested deeply in this wondrous place, planting roots and using our talents and energy to help build a culturally rich state. This is a critical juncture for Oregon's arts and culture sector. Thank you for your continued belief and support. Please pass HB2459 and save one of Oregon's most valuable resources.

Amanda Stark

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Stark', with a stylized, flowing script.