

Submitter: Linda Brown
On Behalf Of: Children and adults recovering from isolation
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

It's not over, the isolation and anxiety related to COVID are clearly evident in the diminished sense of well-being in so many of our children- especially adolescents. The tearful outburst of a high school freshman during a school board meeting this winter as she stated "I've forgotten how to make friends" haunts me. Her school based health clinic suggested she could get an appointment to speak with someone in 2-3 weeks, a lifetime for a 14 year old desperate to be heard.

Therapists have long understood the way art, whether music, theatre or putting feelings on paper via paint and color can bring emotion and expression forward to where it can be addressed. Our arts organizations are ready and eager to help, self expression and emotional sharing are the heart of why we exist.

While schools have been given increased funding to address well documented learning loss in academics, they are under-equipped and too overwhelmed to help with all the social emotional issues children face. Arts recovery funds provide the complimentary means for these issues to be expressed. For example, this past summer Lakewood Center for the Arts gave books written in both English and Spanish teaching youngsters how to share emotion through color to 23,000 underserved children across Oregon. This took an enormous amount of staff time, time normally spent on fundraising and donor communication. No matter, it's what we do.

Continued Arts Recovery Funding will allow us to expand our youth services, as well as continue providing the community with services such as our arts based pre-school which people have come to rely on. Please help us continue our work, the COVID dislocations are not over.