

Submitter: Andre Middleton
On Behalf Of: HB 2459
Committee: Joint Committee On Ways and Means
Measure: SB5506

Good morning, my name is André Middleton and I'm a home owner in the Cully neighborhood of Northeast Portland and I'm testifying in support of HB2459 (THE ARTS RECOVERY FUND BILL

I'm the the Executive Director of Friends of Noise, a NE Portland based all ages arts and youth workforce development nonprofit, a former employee at the regional arts and culture council, a former special education teacher for the visually impaired, a small business owner, and a parent.

I'm advocating for support of the Arts Recovery Fund Bill because I see on a daily basis the impact the arts can and is having on the youth of our community. While we all have been impacted by the pandemic, I've seen that youth, arts organizations and venues that create safer spaces for people of all ages to build community took a particularly outsized hit.

So many arts organizations like Ethos music, my voice music and Worldstage theater are giving young people the hard and soft skills to find their voices and navigate a world that seems I'll equipped to meet their needs.

THE ARTS RECOVERY FUND Bill is so much more than an opportunity to invest in the healing of our fractured community. It's an actually a jobs bill that will sustain employment for people up and down the economic scale. Friends of Noise has recently become a participant in the Oregon Youth Employment Program so that we can help young people from our community with entry levels jobs in the Live sound and event production industry. With the help of Worksystems we are engaged in workforce development via the arts. We are paying youth to learn how to run sound and produce arts events for themselves and their communities. These youth are already being tapped and being! paid to run sound for festivals like Pickathon. Friends of Noise does not have a venue of our own, yet!, so we depend on venues like The Portland Institute for Contemporary art, Mississippi Studios, Oregon Contemporary, World Stage Theater and so many more to house our arts and workforce development programs. These community arts partners and so many more are a proven economic engine.

Investment in the arts industry provides MORE ECONOMIC STIMULUS to surrounding businesses than any other industry. Studies have shown that concerts, shows, theatrical events and other arts events spur a great multiplier effect. Tourism, travel, hotels, restaurants, bars, retail, real estate value, tax base and many other areas of commerce and pillars of the economy are bolstered by a healthy arts economy.

THE ARTS RECOVERY FUND BILL is sorely needed as our state continues to heal and recover from the pandemic. The recently formed Oregon Arts Caucus is a testament to how members of our current legislature see the need for state support of the Arts and the return on that investment from that support thank you!