

3 May 2023

To: House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business,  
Oregon State Legislature

Re: HB 2459 - \$50 million to support recovery of arts and culture sector

Dear members of the House Committee:

My name is Sharita Towne, and I am writing to express my support for the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's (PICA) and HB 2459. I am a transdisciplinary artist and educator based in Portland. I am also the lead artist for a project called the Black Art Ecology of Portland (BAEP), a multi-year, multi-site engagement initiative that develops networks and spaces that remap historical and contemporary Black creative life in our city.

PICA is the primary partner for BAEP. In addition to providing the project with institutional resources, a majority percentage of PICA's SPACE Program will include collaborative program design/delivery and subsidized space for projects, programs, residencies, and events by, with, and of Black artists, creatives, and audiences, with the intention of regularly co-authoring, hosting, and turning over their building and other resources to serve these communities and goals. PICA provides staffing and operational support, fiscal sponsorship, and crucially, it shares space with BAEP. PICA hosted BAEP's launch in March of 2020, and has been incredibly supportive to the organic nature in which BAEP addresses and serves community needs. Within PICA's space, in September of 2021 we directed and produced a comedy special A Movement for Black Laughs in addition to support in developing a Black-run community and artist print shop that runs out of PICA's space. Most recently, PICA served as fiscal sponsor for BAEP as a recipient of the Meyer Memorial Trust's Justice Oregon for Black Lives grant program. This award provides major support to BAEP and our current and future initiatives.

PICA has supported podcast recording space, space for artist and independent researcher Intisar Abioto's work that delves into the historic and contemporary richness of Black Oregon artists, a dual mural between myself and artist Natalie Ball that honors the Black/Indigenous stewardship of this place. And... and.. AND. The list truly goes on and on.

Ensuring that they can continue to maintain a safe, accessible space is vital to BAEP's success. It is also an important space for other community members and organizations who rely on their building as a resource at a time when other such spaces have closed, are facing closure, or are increasingly difficult to afford.

It is my hope that the House Committee will support PICA and the list of other important cultural organizations that would be supported by the passing of HB 2459 - by helping them, the state of Oregon helps the many partners, artists, and community members who use their facilities. If you would like to follow up on this letter with any questions, I can be reached at [satowne@gmail.com](mailto:satowne@gmail.com).

Sincerely,



Sharita Towne, Black Art Ecology of Portland Lead Artist