

January 25, 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:

As a leader in the nonprofit arts and culture sector in Portland and Oregon (including serving as a manager and now director with Portland Institute for Contemporary Art for over ten years), I urge you to give serious attention and support to HB 2459, which requests \$50 million in funds to support the ongoing recovery and new beginnings for the crucial and vibrant arts and culture sector in our state. If this bill is passed, half the funds will be distributed akin to how CARES dollars were circulated, through county coalitions. The other half will be designated for larger organizations and live venues.

Oregon has experienced some of the longest pandemic-related shutdowns of any state in the country, which has heavily impacted the art and cultural field. Those of us working to revive this important part of the local and regional economy and way of life believe recovery will take five years. Audiences have been slow to return to in-person experiences. Many performances continue to be cancelled or postponed due to artists and performers getting sick. Attendance for some organizations is well below 60% of pre-pandemic levels.

At PICA, which was founded in 1995 and produces the annual, international, world-renowned Time-Based Art Festival, we have had to cancel, postpone, or modify countless performances, exhibitions, fundraisers, special events, community groups' presentations, and so many other programs. We have been forced to reduce staff, scale back programming, cut our budget, and are unable to raise salaries to meet the rising costs of living. We have also struggled with the precarity of the field, as we are vulnerable to whatever the current state of the

**PICA**

pandemic might be (people will get sick and audience numbers will be dictated current surges or declines in Covid rates). Nevertheless, we have found ways to stay afloat, to continue to produce art that matters and makes a difference, to support artists' livelihoods and the broad cross-section of communities that rely on artistic and cultural outlets and activities to thrive.

If PICA and our sector at large were to receive additional recovery funds, we could make greater progress toward reestablishing and reinventing the arts and culture landscape that is so critical to what makes our state special and unique. We have some of the best art and artists in the world right here in our own communities, and some of the most dedicated and passionate audiences. Our audiences are nearly 40% Black, Indigenous, and People of Color, and our artists almost 90%. We serve LGBTQ+, Disabled, Immigrant/Refugee, and Deaf-identified artists and communities. We present artists from Oregon, from across the nation, and from around the world. We also work intergenerationally, serving adults, youth, and elders. The more resources we have to reset and recover, the more we will be able to build back our programming and our valuable contributions to the economy, workforce, and creative industry while being safe, responsive, and responsible.

Thank you for your time and consideration of HB 2459, and for your service to your constituents and our state. I sincerely hope we can count on you to support this bill and the tens of thousands of people it will benefit and serve.

Sincerely,

DocuSigned by:  
  
4A8FC8934F29488...  
Roya Amirsoleymani

Artistic Director & Curator of Public Engagement

Portland Institute for Contemporary Art

[roya@pica.org](mailto:roya@pica.org)