

April 28, 2023

Co-Chairs Senator Girod and Representative Holvey
Joint Committee on Ways and Means
Subcommittee on Capital Construction
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: CREF Slate 2023-25

Dear Co-Chairs Girod, Holvey and Members of the Subcommittee:

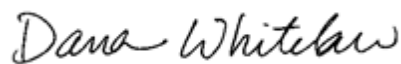
On behalf of the High Desert Museum in Bend, we respectfully request that the Oregon Joint Committee on Ways & Means Subcommittee on Capital Construction support the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon's (CACO) 2023 Cultural Resources Economic Fund (CREF) slate of capital construction projects. The 16 peer-reviewed and endorsed projects on the slate includes an allocation of \$2 million from the Cultural Resource Economic Fund toward the Museum's construction of a new, 20,000-square-foot wing and renovation of its 4,500-square-foot permanent exhibition dedicated to Indigenous peoples of the High Desert. These spaces will allow the Museum to expand its preK-12 educational offerings and provide vibrant arts opportunities for what is a dynamic, fast-growing region.

For more than 40 years, the High Desert Museum has served as an essential community anchor that provides educational opportunities to Central and Eastern Oregon. It is today the largest arts and culture institution east of the Cascades—nearly 200,000 visit the Museum annually—and contributes more than \$20 million per year to the local economy. In addition to being a Smithsonian Affiliate, the Museum in 2021 was one of three in the U.S. recognized with the National Medal for Museum and Library Service, the highest honor for museums in the country.

Yet as Central Oregon has grown, so has demand for the Museum's unique educational experiences. Its K-5th grade Kids Camps—a critical childcare resource during summer and school breaks—filled within 3 minutes of registration opening until the Museum recently switched to a lottery system. Demand continues to drive long wait lists. The new public wing will include a state-of-the-art learning center, art gallery and event spaces, creating additional capacity and opportunities for innovative art and STEM experiences not otherwise possible in our primarily rural region. In addition to serving preK-12 students, it will accommodate teacher trainings as well as space for community events.

This inspiring expansion at the High Desert Museum will create meaningful access to education and arts opportunities for the next 40 years. We went through a rigorous application and review process to be selected as part of this amazing slate of projects. The Museum has raised more than half of the \$40 million needed for the project, and the \$2 million CREF allotment would be an important step toward our goal. We ask the committee to fund the \$11.88M slate of CACO's endorsed projects and prioritize increased access to and expansion of arts and culture in our communities.

Sincerely,



Dana Whitelaw, PhD
Executive Director



Nelson Mathews
Board Chair

HIGH DESERT MUSEUM

59800 SOUTH HIGHWAY 97 | BEND, OREGON 97702 | HIGHDESERTMUSEUM.ORG