



February 5, 2024

Oregon Legislature
House Committee on Economic Development & Small Business
Salem, Oregon

Dear Chair Bynum and Committee Members on Economic Development & Small Business,

As a leader of Oregon's largest non-profit arts organization, I strongly request your support and advocacy for **HB4124**. Each arts organization has an important story to tell about the impact that they make in our state; allow me to share some insights about ours.

The Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) is a paragon of American Theatre, and has been a cultural beacon since 1935, drawing millions of visitors to the City of Ashland and our beautiful State.

Our commissioned works have gone on to Broadway and stages around the world, and many of our artists have honed their craft in our productions, later reaching the pinnacle of artistic achievement with Tony Awards, Golden Globes, Pulitzer Prizes, and Oscar nominations. With our nationally recognized education programs, we have brought generations of schoolchildren to Southern Oregon to experience live theatre and we've sent teaching artists outbound to hundreds of schools across the West Coast as well. The cultural impact OSF has had on the industry is difficult to overstate.

Yet - OSF is also a critical driver of the region's economy, with an estimated impact of \$120 million annually, before the pandemic shuttered our stages. Our Main St. businesses: local hotels, bed & breakfasts, retail stores, restaurants, wineries, art galleries, and even rafting companies, are all affected by the significant amount of tourism that is generated by OSF. As a destination theatre, our impact on the local economy is truly significant.

HB 4124 includes support for arts and culture organizations like ours across the state that enrich the life experiences of Oregonians, and drive material economic impact in multiple regions. The funding from this bill helps lay the foundation for resilience in the sector, as we build back our audiences, supporters, and memberships.

We appreciate your consideration and commitment to the economic well-being and cultural vibrancy of our state.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tyler Hokama', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tyler Hokama
Interim Executive Director, Oregon Shakespeare Festival
Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon (CACO) Board Member