

The Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau is a non-profit organization cooperating with the National Park Service (NPS) in the preservation, stewardship and improvement of the cultural and natural resources of the Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve.



February 5, 2024

Chair Janelle Bynum
Vice Chairs Ed Diehl and Daniel Nguyen, and Committee Members
House Committee on Economic Development and Small Business
Oregon Legislature Salem, OR 97301

Dear Chair Bynum and Committee Members,

Board of Directors

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Sue Densmore
Executive Director

Jeremy Curtis
**Superintendent Oregon
Caves National
Monument and Preserve**

Today I am writing to urge your support and passage of HB4124. This bill includes the slate of 14 statewide projects proposed by the Cultural Resources Economic Fund (CREF). The original slate contained 16 projects and two Portland-area projects were funded in the 2023 session, leaving 14 statewide projects without support. This slate was reviewed and prioritized by the Cultural Advocacy Coalition, and reflects many important capital construction projects in large and small communities, each making a difference in their economic vitality. The unfunded projects in 2023 total \$7.8 million and represent rural, community projects in Astoria, Grants Pass, Eugene, John Day, Bend, Rainer, Medford, and Cave Junction, Oregon.

HB 4124 also includes important “resiliency” funding for the arts, culture and heritage sector, a major economic driver and jobs producer. This one time investment would infuse this sector with increased resiliency. By helping our fellow citizens preserve our state's unique built, natural and cultural environments, we help celebrate and promote the places and spaces that make Oregon special and distinct. House bill 4124 provides \$5.6 m for the anchor arts groups, and supports a statewide grant fund of \$14 m for program support.

The Friends of the Oregon Caves, CREF project would support the restoration of the historic integrity of the Oregon Caves Chateau. The National Park Service will fund the Life, Safety, Accessibility, Seismic and Foundation upgrades. The Oregon Caves National Monument and Preserve, and it's National Historic Landmark Lodge are the main economic driver for this remote region of Oregon. Over 120,000 visitors enjoy the cave tours and 6,000 stay at the lodge each year. With the restoration of the Chateau – this number is expected to rise to 200,000. This would bring over 75 jobs to the small community of Cave Junction with a population of 1,100.



We are pleased to be one of the prioritized CREF projects and urge support of HB4124. With \$27 million in funding, this bill will boost local economies. We urge your strong support for the creative sector through passage of HB 4124.

Warm regards,

Sue Densmore
Executive Director