

February 8, 2024

Subject: Support for HB 4124 - Relief for Cultural Organizations

Dear Chair Bynum, Vice Chairs Diehl and Nguyen, and Committee Members,

I am writing to express my strong support for House Bill 4124, which would provide much-needed financial relief for Oregon cultural organizations in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and ongoing challenges in Portland and other areas of our state.

The Lan Su Chinese Garden has been a cherished cultural institution in our community for many years, offering a place of education and celebration of Chinese culture. However, like countless other cultural organizations across our state, Lan Su has faced unprecedented challenges in recent years.

In 2020, Lan Su Chinese Garden experienced a staggering 75% loss in earned revenue, directly attributable to the pandemic. The devastating financial implications of this loss have significantly strained the organization's ability to fulfill our mission and serve our community. The challenges are ongoing, and Lan Su estimates that it will take an additional two years to fully recover to pre-pandemic levels of operation.

Passing HB 4124 would play a vital role in aiding Lan Su Chinese Garden and other cultural organizations in our state. These bills would set aside funds for the Oregon Business Development Department to help cultural organizations in dire need. That financial support would go a long way in helping us all survive these tough times and keep adding to our community's cultural richness.

The importance of the arts and culture sector in Oregon cannot be overstated. Cultural organizations such as Lan Su Chinese Garden are not only valuable cultural resources but also crucial economic contributors. This past fall, Americans for the Arts released its latest economic study showing arts and culture accounted for more than \$829 million in economic activity in 2022. In the city of Portland alone, arts and culture contributed more than \$456 million in economic activity.

I hope you will agree that arts and culture enhance our quality of life, attract tourists, and provide jobs, including artists, educators, and support staff. Supporting these organizations during this critical time is an investment in our state's cultural heritage, economic revitalization, and the well-being of our community.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Nye