

Submitter: Stephen Kehner

On Behalf Of:

Committee: Senate Committee On Labor and Business

Measure: SB1582

Dear Oregon State Legislator,

I am writing to you as a working musician in Oregon and a member of the American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, Local 99. During February's upcoming short session, arts funding will be coming before the legislature, the remainder of a bill that was only partially passed in 2023. While 2023's funding will have a marked impact on the lives of artists around the state, it is not enough. Major arts organizations that shape Oregon culture—such as the Oregon Symphony, Portland Center Stage, Portland Opera and more—did not receive any of their requested funding last year. Without it in 2024, they will struggle to survive. These anchor organizations, along with dozens of smaller organizations and venues, are a significant driver of Oregon's economy and need help on the upswing of the COVID-19 crisis.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies, the arts and culture sector of Oregon generated \$9.3 billion in 2021 (3.4% of the state's GDP). That's quite a contribution to Oregon's GDP given that the state ranks 41st in the nation for funding the arts. We can do better!

I feel obligated, as a voting constituent, to voice my support for the full passage of arts funding this year. It is this funding that keeps me employed, along with 62,725 other arts and culture workers (3.2% of Oregon's workforce). Oregon's music and arts culture is vibrant, diverse, and constantly evolving. Oregon should be modeling what great support of the arts looks like to other states, not the other way around. It must be protected and supported through ample state funding. I implore you to pass arts funding in February.

Thank you,
Stephen Kehner