

February 13, 2025

Chair Nguyen and Members of the Committee,

My name is Kelly Johnson, and I am the Executive Director at the Arts & Business Alliance of Eugene (ABAE), a small nonprofit dedicated to driving investment to preserve and enhance Eugene's creative and cultural vibrancy. We are proud recipients of Oregon Arts Commission funding through their Small Operating Support Grant, and I want to emphasize just how critical this funding is—not just for our organization, but for the entire arts ecosystem across the state.

There are three key reasons why this investment is so vital:

- **Support for Small Organizations** – The Oregon Arts Commission ensures that a portion of its funding is dedicated to smaller organizations. This is crucial because, too often, smaller nonprofits are overlooked when competing with larger institutions. The Commission's commitment to equitable access to funding helps ensure that all arts organizations, regardless of size, have the resources they need to contribute to Oregon's cultural landscape.
- **Flexible Operational Funding** – One of the most challenging aspects of nonprofit sustainability is securing operational funding. Many grantmakers focus on project-based support, but without core operational funding, organizations struggle to keep their doors open. The flexible support provided by the Oregon Arts Commission allows nonprofits like ours to cover essential costs, sustain staff, and remain agile in responding to community needs.
- **Statewide Economic Impact** – The impact of this funding extends far beyond the arts sector. Our organization led the Arts & Economic Prosperity Study in our region, which found that nonprofit arts and culture organizations generate **\$124 million in economic impact in Eugene alone**. Investments like those made by the Oregon Arts Commission do more than sustain the arts—they drive economic growth, support jobs, and enhance community well-being.

It's important to remember that an investment in the arts is never a one-sided transaction. Every dollar of public money spent on the arts generates a return on investment, both in terms of direct economic impact and the broader societal benefits. The arts attract visitors, support local businesses, enhance education, and strengthen our communities. The public funds allocated to the Oregon Arts Commission are not just supporting the arts—they are benefiting the public by driving prosperity, creativity, and cultural vibrancy across the state.

Increasing the Oregon Arts Commission budget to \$10 million is an investment in Oregon's future—one that strengthens our creative sector, fuels economic prosperity, and ensures access to the arts for all communities. I urge you to support this critical funding increase.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Kelly Johnson

