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February 12, 2025

Representative Nguyen, Chair
Representatives Diehl and Isadore, Vice-Chairs
House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business and Trade
Oregon Legislature
Salem, Oregon 97301

RE: HB 3189, HB 3191

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

Thank you for scheduling time to hear from leaders of Oregon's arts, culture, heritage and humanities organizations on February 17, 2025. We are pleased to add our support for **HB 3189 and HB 3191** and urge your positive consideration and adoption.

We represent over 350 members across the state from individual artists to large organizations, from tribal coalitions to historic properties, from traveling exhibits to place-based restorations. We know the power of creativity to build communities, deepen collective understanding, and generate economic impact. Our mission is to make sure that every Oregonian has access to creativity in their communities across the state because we know that our many cultural and artistic assets will inspire, heal and build community health and strength. Our 2025 priorities include:

House Bill 3189 raises the grants budget of the Oregon Arts Commission to \$10 million which represents a doubling of available funds to be distributed to arts and culture providers across the state. For 17 years, Oregon's arts funding has stayed relatively flat and this funding increase will help move Oregon in the top half of the fifty states in terms of state support from our current standing of 39th. The arts and culture sector pumps \$829 million into Oregon's economy each year, attracting 8.9 million attendees to live events. This is not about entertainment or a "nice-to-have" investment; it is a critical need for strengthening the cultural landscape of our state and quite simply, represents an investment in every Oregonian. The maximum grant from these funds is currently \$25,000.

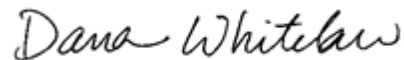
House Bill 3191 presents 14 cultural projects for capital investment through the Cultural Resources Economic Funds (CREF) for a total amount of \$9.3 million. After a statewide call for proposals, these projects were carefully vetted by a peer review committee including experts from the Oregon Arts Commission and the Oregon Cultural Trust. This list of projects reflects those most "ready" for state investment meaning they have long-term access to their land, have obtained the necessary permits and approvals for their projects, and have raised other funds outside of state dollars. The legislature has funded the CREF capital slate since 2013 assisting over 40 organizations – small and large, rural and urban, with critical capital needs. This year's slate covers projects in Salem, Astoria, Coos Bay, Baker City, Bend, Jacksonville, Joseph, Government Camp, Warm Springs, Ashland, and Portland.

A third issue we are prioritizing for the 2025 legislative session is supporting one-time funding for the large arts organizations. In 2023, the legislature appropriated dollars directly to this group of providers to partially-match a pledge made by private philanthropy.

The Oregon Community Foundation and the James F. and Marion L. Miller Foundation stepped up and contributed their match and it is now up to the state to complete their match by providing \$5.5 million to the Oregon Symphony, Oregon Ballet Theatre, Oregon Shakespeare Festival, Portland Art Museum, Portland Center Stage and the Portland Opera. Because the current cap on the grants possible from the Oregon Arts Commission is \$25,000, this one-time direct funding for these larger organizations will help keep them operational at a higher level.

Again, we urge your positive action on these bills which will better position arts, culture, heritage and humanities in Oregon and allow us to preserve our treasures and innovate for the future of this critical piece of state infrastructure.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dana Whitelaw".

Dana Whitelaw
President
Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon