



February 17, 2025

Dear Chair Nguyen, Vice Chairs Diehl and Isadore and members of the House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade:

I'm writing on behalf of the Portland Art Museum to ask that you support House Bill 3189, which raises the grants budget of the Oregon Arts Commission to \$10 million, a doubling of available funds to be distributed to arts and culture providers across the state. This funding increase will ensure that Oregon's vibrant arts and culture continue to grow and thrive.

The nonprofit arts and culture sector contributes \$829 million and 13,000 jobs into Oregon's economy each year.¹ The Oregon Arts Commission provides critical support to these organizations through grant programs and services across the state, serving urban and rural audiences and ensuring the arts are accessible and sustainable in all communities.

In addition to supporting this increase to the Art Commission's funding, I respectfully ask that you approve the -1 amendment which provides an additional \$5.5 million for Oregon's anchor arts organizations including the Portland Art Museum.

As you are well aware, the arts and cultural sector continues to struggle to find its footing following the pandemic and challenging conditions in our cities and towns. I assure you that things are getting better, but recovery is taking longer than many of us had planned or budgeted for.

The Museum is currently running a \$1.2 million deficit for FY2025. Our projected attendance remains below pre-pandemic levels and about 7% below what we'd projected. Meanwhile, our staffing costs are up 20% since 2019, due to increased security needs.

At the same time, I'm extremely optimistic about the future. We are shrinking our deficit each year and are on track to return to a balanced budget by FY2027. We just need to be sure we can get there as a strong and healthy organization.

We've already seen how the Museum's Free First Thursdays and special exhibitions, including *Monet to Matisse: French Moderns*, are bringing people back downtown and driving more economic activity. By the end of this year, we will have completed our work to reimagine our Museum campus in such a way as to bring more works and more people into our galleries and community spaces. I was thrilled that Travel and Leisure Magazine highlighted the Portland Art Museum, along with PDX Airport among the Top 50 Places to visit in 2025.

In closing, I want to thank you for considering this request and for the Legislature's past support of our sector and the Museum. It's critical for arts and culture organizations across Oregon to know that they have the support of their state's leaders.

Sincerely,

Brian Ferriso
Director and Chief Curator

¹ Americans for the Arts, Arts and Economic Prosperity 6 (2022)
https://www.oregon.gov/biz/aboutus/artscommission/Documents/AEP6/OR_StateOfOregon_AEP6_OnePageSummaryOfFindings.pdf