



WORLD
FORESTRY
CENTER

February 14, 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 3191

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

Thank you for scheduling time to evaluate **HB 3191** which proposes state funding for cultural capital projects. **We enthusiastically urge your positive consideration and adoption.**

World Forestry Center was established in 1966 as a non-profit educational organization dedicated to engaging and educating the public in creating a sustainable future for our forests and our communities. Today we are re-developing our 5.5-acre campus in Washington Park to construct a new Experience Center to replace the existing Merlo Hall thereby adding an additional public education space to our Discovery Museum. The Experience Center will be a 27,300 square foot mass timber building that demonstrates the potential of innovative wood technologies in its frame, and inside offer state-of-the-art immersive and highly interactive exhibits and experiences. We hope to empower the public to engage in forestry issues through this inviting space using many tools including arts performances, exhibitions and public convenings. Most of the resources for this project are being raised privately, and we see a role for the State of Oregon to share in bringing this vision to life through the CREF program. Emerging issues such as wildfire, climate change and demographic shifts increase the urgency to reach the public in new ways.

The legislature has funded the Cultural Resources Economic Fund capital slate since 2013 assisting over 40 organizations – small and large, rural and urban -- with critical capital needs. This year's slate covers 14 projects in Salem, Astoria, Coos Bay, Baker City, Bend, Jacksonville, Joseph, Government Camp, Warm Springs, Ashland, and Portland, for a total of \$9.3 million. The state's contribution comes after careful peer review which includes 1) a statewide call for proposals; 2) two rounds of vetting and assessment by a peer review committee which includes representatives from the Oregon Arts Commission and the Oregon Cultural Trust, and 3) a concrete demonstration of stability and staying power to ensure the state investment will endure to benefit all Oregonians.

We believe this project is ready for state investment and will bring more critical programming around our forests to all Oregonians. We believe you will be inspired and hopeful when you experience the future of forests through this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph Furia".

Joseph Furia
Executive Director
World Forestry Center