

Submitter: Mary Steen

On Behalf Of:

Committee: House Committee On Economic Development, Small Business, and Trade

Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3189

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

I am testifying in support of HB3189.

Arts funding in Oregon is on life support. And yet, the arts provide so much to our mental, emotional and civic wellbeing. The arts help communities distinguish themselves in order to attract visitors, new residents, and new businesses. More importantly is what the arts do for those who already are here.

For example, the Portland Art Museum (PAM) has brought world class exhibits to Portland, and it is close to completing its new Rothko Pavillion, which will be a treasure to us and a major draw for the state. The Oregon Ballet Theater is back and providing wonderful performances. Thanks to past legislative funding, the Oregon Shakespeare Festival has survived to once again present first class productions in Ashland (where I enjoyed the theater and the city this past summer).

I will focus, however, on the Oregon Symphony. I currently serve on its board along with several others who are dedicated to its musical offerings and bringing back downtown Portland. Over its season, the symphony brought over 220,000 people to downtown. There is much more than classical music - concerts have varied from popular music, kids' programs, rap, Gospel Christmas and special events. The symphony supports musicians in the schools; has brought thousands of students in grades 3 - 5 to the concert hall for special programs; and puts on the Lullaby Project (pairing parents experiencing housing insecurity with symphony musicians to write and record lullabies for their children). The symphony plays in Salem, at The Reser in Beaverton. It has even played in prisons. Also, there is a whole eco system of symphony musicians providing music lessons and tutoring children who can't get those experiences in school.

In addition, the arts and culture sector of the economy is a significant contributor to Oregon - \$829 million in FY 2022. Spending by arts organizations and their audiences directly result in personal income to Oregonians; business revenues to restaurants, hotels and shops; and significant tax revenues to local governments and the State. Many of those 220,000 people who come to downtown Portland for symphony programs are among those customers and taxpayers. The same is true for numerous Oregon communities who have museums, cultural institutions and arts organizations that draw visitors.

When the State invests in arts and culture, it not only provides for its citizens, it also gets a monetary return on its investment.

Please support HB3189.

Thank you,

Mary (MJ) Steen  
Portland, Oregon