

Submitter: Mark Woodworth
On Behalf Of: Elsinore Theatre
Committee: House Committee On Economic Development, Small
Business, and Trade
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3191

Esteemed Members of the Committee,

My name is Mark Woodworth, technical director for the Elsinore Theatre, and an advocate for the arts and in Oregon. Thank you for the opportunity to present my testimony in support of HB3191. Though it be redundant, I want to re-emphasize the vital role that arts and culture play in our community, economy, education system, and overall quality of life.

Economic Impact

The Elsinore Theatre contributes significantly to the economic well-being of Salem, Oregon. Every day there is an event, our staff, touring personnel, and guests, support local restaurants, hotels, and recreational activities (golf, wine-tasting, Uber drivers, etc.) in addition to attracting tourists from around the world who come to see their favorite artist. By investing in the arts, we enrich our cultural landscape and also stimulate economic growth, job creation, and tourism revenue.

Educational Benefits

Arts education is a fundamental component of a well-rounded curriculum. Studies have shown that students who participate in arts programs demonstrate improved academic performance, higher graduation rates, and enhanced critical thinking and problem-solving skills. Additionally, arts education fosters creativity, empathy, and cultural awareness—traits that are essential for the future workforce of Oregon.

Community and Social Benefits

Arts and cultural programs bring communities together, fostering a sense of belonging and civic engagement. They provide a platform for diverse voices and stories, promoting understanding and inclusivity. Furthermore, participation in the arts has been linked to improved mental health and well-being, offering a source of solace and joy during challenging times. An example of this is in December of 2022, right after Covid restrictions were lifted, three separate local dance groups each performed their version of The Nutcracker, amazingly, each performance sold-out! That translates to about 3,600 local residents wanting to connect (an unprecedented number that speaks to the value of the arts).

In conclusion, I respectfully urge the committee to approve HB3191. The arts are not a luxury but a necessity that enriches our lives, strengthens our economy, and enhances our communities. The decisions of today are the legacy of tomorrow. By investing in the arts, we invest in the future of Oregon—a future that is vibrant, inclusive, and prosperous.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,