



February 17, 2025

Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Diehl & Isadore, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Gabriella Calicchio and I am the Executive Director of the Oregon Shakespeare Festival. I appreciate the opportunity to testify in strong support of HB 3191, which would allocate \$375,000 to the Oregon Shakespeare Festival (OSF) to support a critical capital improvement project. This funding is an investment in Oregon's creative economy, the preservation of cultural heritage, and the future of artistic innovation in our state.

For nearly 90 years, OSF has played a vital role in Oregon's cultural and economic landscape. Each year, OSF attracts thousands of visitors from across the country, contributing more than \$120 million to the Southern Oregon economy. The festival is not just a theater company—it is a cornerstone of tourism, local business growth, and artistic excellence. However, despite our long history of success, we face significant challenges in maintaining the infrastructure necessary to foster new artistic works and continue our tradition of storytelling that reflects diverse voices.

One of our most pressing needs is the renovation of the Black Swan Theatre, a 9,000-square-foot space that was decommissioned in 2002 due to its aging infrastructure. While OSF has several existing performance venues, they are fully booked throughout our season, leaving us without a dedicated space for the development of new works. The lack of such a space limits our ability to support emerging playwrights and workshop new productions, which are essential to keeping OSF at the forefront of American theater.

The funding provided through HB 3191 will contribute directly to the revitalization of the Black Swan Theatre. This investment will allow us to restore and upgrade the building, including critical structural repairs, accessibility improvements, and modernization of key systems such as lighting, sound, and seating. With these improvements, the Black Swan Theatre will once again serve as a hub for creativity, providing a space for OSF's New Works Commissioning Program and giving historically underrepresented playwrights the opportunity to develop and share their stories.

This project is not just about restoring a building—it is about ensuring that OSF remains a national leader in theatrical innovation and a vital driver of Oregon's economy. By investing in this space, we are investing in the artists of the future, in new works that will shape the cultural landscape, and in the continued economic vitality of Ashland and Southern Oregon. Furthermore, this project aligns with the goals of the Cultural Resources Economic Fund by enhancing access to the arts, promoting diversity and inclusion, and reinforcing Oregon's reputation as a premier destination for performing arts.

On behalf of OSF, our artists, staff, and the many businesses and individuals who benefit from a thriving arts sector, I urge your support for HB 3191. Your investment in OSF is an investment in Oregon's cultural and economic future. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Gabriella Calicchio

Executive Director, Oregon Shakespeare Festival