

My name is Shannon Jones Isadore and I am proud to serve as the state representative for House District 33, which spans downtown and NW Portland, Linnton, and Cathedral Park. As a state representative for downtown Portland as well as a downtown business owner, I am highly supportive of HB 2991 and pleased to see broad support for this crucial investment.

HB 2291 with the forthcoming -2 amendment authorizes a grant fund to be administered by the Portland Metro Chamber Charitable Institute, providing \$10 million for festivals and other public events. The Rose Festival, Winter Lights Festival, Blues Festival, and Human Access project are named as “economic drivers” and are prioritized for funding. Downtown revitalization is key to not only Portland, but Oregon’s success. Festivals like these bring vital foot traffic downtown, as well as tourists from across the state, country, and globe. We know that when tourists visit Oregon, they don’t just stay in Portland– they take trips to the coast, go to wineries in the Willamette Valley, and explore Oregon’s natural spaces across the state, and continue to seek out Oregon products after returning home. As Oregon’s largest city, Portland’s reputation as a world class travel destination serves as a doorway to the entire state. In short, when Portland thrives, Oregon thrives.

We’ve seen how these types of events are effective for growing visitor traffic and hotel occupancy as well as increasing safety as public spaces are populated. Investing in these festivals and river events are proven ways to materially support Portland and Oregon’s economic vitality. But in today’s economic climate, the margins on these events have grown increasingly smaller, putting these important economic drivers at risk. It’s time for the state to step in and provide financial support to ensure that we don’t lose these key economic drivers. HB 2291 will provide one-time grants and establish a grant fund that events throughout the city may apply for.

HB 2291 will also establish a process to study the modernization of the operation and management of Tom McCall Waterfront Park and the river. Portland State University Institute for Metropolitan Studies will convene stakeholders and conduct the study to examine best practices from peer waterfront cities including successful public - private independent management models. By establishing this stakeholder process, HB 2911 recognizes that Portland must transform Waterfront Park and the Willamette River into ongoing, year round, economic and cultural drivers. The group of stakeholders will develop a report and share back recommendations with the legislature next year.

Data consistently shows that supporting Portland’s economy produces a strong return on investment that benefits the entire State of Oregon. I urge you to pass HB 2291 and hope to see the bill fully funded in Ways and Means.

Sincerely,
Representative Shannon Jones Isadore



Rep. Shannon Jones Isadore

Oregon State Legislature, House District 33
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