

TRAVEL PORTLAND

100 S.W. MAIN ST., STE. 1100 | PORTLAND, OR 97204 | 503-275-9750 | TRAVELPORTLAND.COM

March 31, 2025

House Committee on Economic Development, Small Business and Trade
Oregon State Capitol, 900 Court Street NE
Salem, Oregon 97301

Re: HB 2291-2

Dear Chair Nguyen, Vice-Chairs Diehl and Isadore and members of the committee,

As President and CEO of Travel Portland, I am writing to express my strong support for the -2 amendment to House Bill 2291.

Travel Portland is the Destination Marketing Organization for the City of Portland and our mission is to generate travel demand that drives economic impact.

The proposed investment to stabilize our signature festivals and lead a process to define a new paradigm for Waterfront Park is a much-needed step in the right direction for Oregon's largest city. We know well the travel motivators that bring visitors to Portland, and we also know how critical the vibrancy created by large-scale signature events is to our city and state. People seeking urban experiences anticipate the energy that comes from a robust and steady series of events. They bring communities together, inspire visitors to stay in area hotels, and create memories that contribute to a much-needed shift in Portland's reputation.

Specifically, the Winter Lights, Waterfront Blues and Rose Festivals and Willamette River events put on by the Human Access Project are proven drivers of downtown foot traffic and economic and cultural vitality in Portland.

Cellphone data shows that nearly 80,000 visitors were downtown over the four days of the 2024 Waterfront Blues Festival. In the same year, 95,000 visitors came downtown over the eight Winter Lights Festival nights and 47,000 people lined the streets for the Rose Festival Starlight Parade.

Simply stated, large-scale events give visitors and residents from throughout the city, region and state reasons to come to downtown Portland and remember why they love this city.

And this matters now more than ever.

As Portland turns the corner on livability and safety issues that have damaged our reputation and the livelihoods of so many in our tourism and hospitality industry, we need to commit to what is working now and drive toward a more sustainable and successful model for the future.

House Bill 2291 offers stability for our home-grown, large-scale festivals and events that are unique to Portland. It also offers a path forward toward a new operating framework for our waterfront that not only will make it more affordable and feasible for event producers, but also prioritizes the type of infrastructure, amenities and services that will pave the way for the quality event experiences Portlanders and visitors expect and deserve.

House Bill 2291 is how we keep our foot on the gas and keep fighting for Portland's future as our state's largest thriving, vibrant and welcoming urban center.

Thank you very much for your consideration and for your support of House Bill 2291-2.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'MC', is positioned above the typed name.

Megan Conway
President & CEO