

College of the Arts
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May 1, 2025

Dear Co-Chair Fred Girod, Co-Chair Rob Nosse, and Members of the Subcommittee on Capital Construction,

My name is Karen O'Donnell Stein, and I'm the Marketing and Communications Manager for the College of the Arts at Portland State University. I'm writing to voice my strong support for Portland State University's request for \$85 million in Article XI-G bonds to help fund the development of the Performing Arts and Culture Center (PACC).

This once-in-a-century opportunity will create a nationally distinct performing arts and education hub in the heart of downtown Portland. This project is not just about replacing a building—it's about transforming our city.

This project has the potential to make the city of Portland a cultural destination not only for visitors who love and value world-class artistry, performance, and storytelling, but for the artists themselves. Artists value and appreciate great acoustics, sightlines, sound systems and stages. The most successful artists go where they know they will look and sound their best. There's a reason why Carnegie Hall is so universally lauded by artists. Having a state-of-the-art performance venue right here on our campus will enable Portland to attract high-wattage stars and nationally known performance groups, which will in turn bring in more visitors to our city, who will then spend their time and funds at our local businesses, restaurants and hotels—supporting our local economy.

Further, the learning opportunities for our students that would come with the new Performing Arts and Culture Center are boundless. Artists from around the world, coming to perform at the PACC, would have the opportunity to give master classes or sit in on rehearsals of our stellar choirs, jazz ensembles, operas, orchestra, and more, perhaps even giving feedback and career advice. Students might have the opportunity to collaborate and practice with some of these artists. The benefits that our students might gain from these kinds of experiences are potentially career-making for students.

PSU's larger ensembles desperately need sufficiently large, well-designed rehearsal spaces, which simply do not exist anywhere on campus. This project would give our orchestra and band, for example, much-needed spaces for rehearsal and performance.

Finally, this project has the potential of highlighting the Halprin Sequence, a largely overlooked gem of urban design. Few residents know of or take advantage of this peaceful, beautiful space, right in downtown, and I've long thought its relative obscurity was a lost opportunity. Having the PACC at the southern end of the Halprin Sequence, with the Keller Fountain at the northern end, would bring this space to life, as scores of attendees walked through the Halprin Sequence to attend an evening concert, or went for a lovely afternoon walk on their way to a Broadway in Portland matinee.

This is a smart, strategic investment with many linked benefits, including:

- **Revitalizing downtown Portland**, attracting residents, businesses, and visitors
- **Strengthening the arts ecosystem** with accessible venues for diverse artists and organizations
- **Supporting Oregon's students** with transformative learning and career opportunities in the performing arts
- **Creating and preserving good jobs**—including union jobs at Keller and more than 2,000 new construction jobs
- **Attracting additional investment** and unlock the potential of surrounding developable land

Portland needs to be a place that shows its support of the arts – because the arts (along with family, friends, and a sense of purpose) are what make life worth living. Through the arts, we learn about ourselves and each other. We learn to respect and lift up one another. Portland may be the city that works, but it should also be the city that creates.

I urge you to fully fund PSU's \$85 million request. Let's invest in the arts, in students, and in the future of downtown Portland.

Thank you for your time and for your service to the State of Oregon.

Sincerely,

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