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**Issue Brief: Oregon Cultural Trust Modernization**

**Background:** The Oregon Cultural Trust was created by the Legislature in 2001, in a near unanimous vote. The Trust was established to support, stabilize and protect Oregon culture; and to enhance the lives of Oregonians by increasing opportunities to experience Oregon’s unique cultural offerings.

The Oregon Cultural Trust was created to serve as a repository of public and private funds. Private donations to the Trust are eligible for a state tax credit and donations are distributed or held on a percentage basis, set by statute. Currently, 58% of every donation is retained in the Cultural Trust corpus. Of the remaining 42%, 7.5% is dedicated to administration and the remaining 34.5% is divided equally among cultural partner agencies; a statewide network of volunteer-based cultural coalitions in each county; and to cultural 501c(3) nonprofits through a competitive grant process.

**Issue:** Donations to the Oregon Cultural Trust serve as a dedicated source of revenues to preserve and support cultural activities which are unique to Oregon’s identity, including our shared and individual sense of heritage, history, place, creativity and art, traditions and customs. Distribution of funds donated to the Trust, as directed by statute, have not been revisited by the legislature in the 14 years since the Trust was created.

**Position:** The Oregon Cultural Trust is a uniquely Oregon concept, which partners directly with Oregonians to advance culture in our state through personal and corporate donations. The Cultural Advocacy Coalition supports the Trust as a valuable resource for Oregon’s cultural community. The Coalition affirms the tenets which underpin the Trust’s mission, as well as its economic and strategic value to the achievement of statewide policy objectives in community development, health care, jobs and education.

The Coalition supports immediate changes to the Trust’s statute which lead to greater investment in the work of cultural nonprofits while protecting current distribution amounts to partners, tribes and county cultural coalitions. Increasing the distribution of currently available resources would allow the Oregon Cultural Trust, without new taxes or General Fund expenditures, to act as an even more powerful tool to advance place-based economic development; expand access to arts and culture; and attract and retain educated citizens as well as the innovative businesses who employ them.