



culturaladvocacycoalition

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July 18, 2020

The Honorable Jeff Merkley
The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
The Honorable Greg Walden
The Honorable Peter DeFazio
The Honorable Kurt Schrader
United States House of Representatives

Dear Members of Oregon's Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of more than 1,400 nonprofit arts organizations across the state of Oregon, thank you for your steadfast support of culture and creativity in our state.

Through conversations with many of our members, you know that COVID-19 has wreaked havoc on our industry. Arts organizations have experienced massive losses, and thousands of creative workers remain out of work. Nationally, Americans for the Arts estimates that two-thirds of all artists are unemployed, and the nonprofit arts and culture industry faces over \$5 billion in losses.

The road to recovery will be long, and many arts organizations won't survive without additional state and federal aid. We are thrilled that Oregon's legislative emergency board last week approved \$50 million for arts organizations and venues — an extraordinary investment that recognizes the importance of our sector. We greatly appreciate this funding, and we have more work to do to support the recovery and resiliency of artists, arts organizations and cultural nonprofits in Oregon.

As Congress prepares additional proposals for COVID-19 federal assistance, we ask you to support the following policies and investments:

1. **Provide and extend federal economic relief for arts organizations.** To save millions of jobs across the country, Congress should expand, extend and recapitalize the Paycheck Protection Program. We support proposals to provide a second round of PPP loans for those who qualify, and to forgive loans to nonprofits through the Main Street Lending Program and the Economic Stabilization Fund. We also call on Congress to fully fund the Economic Injury Disaster Program.

Senator Wyden, we thank you for co-sponsoring a bipartisan bill, Protecting Nonprofits from Catastrophic Cash Flow Strain Act (not yet numbered), that would help self-insured nonprofits that were harmed by changes to unemployment insurance in the CARES Act. We hope that legislation will ultimately be approved.

2. **Protect artists and gig economy workers.** With so many artists and creatives out of work, we urge you to extend pandemic unemployment benefits beyond July. We also call on Congress to expand access to health coverage and care for those with atypical employment structures.

3. **Encourage communities to support and engage in the arts.** Let's incentivize philanthropy for arts and culture organizations by removing the \$300 cap on charitable deductions for non-itemizers. We also hope Congress will adopt an emergency broadband benefit to foster equitable participation in online cultural activities.
4. **Invest in post-COVID-19 arts infrastructure.** Please ensure that arts facilities and venues are eligible to apply for any infrastructure programs designed to help businesses renovate, refurbish, and adopt new public health protocols.
5. **Include the arts and culture sector in re-opening plans.** Artists and arts organizations will be vital in helping our communities recover, which is why we ask Congress to include our sector when considering public health and workplace safety policies, as well as discussions about liability policy and business interruption insurance.
6. **Support ongoing creative sector activity.** In addition to funding the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Institute of Museum and Library Services at higher levels in FY21 as proposed by the House Interior Appropriations Subcommittee, we call on Congress to approve additional and substantial emergency relief funding for nonprofit arts and culture organizations through these agencies. The CALMER Act (Culture, Arts, Libraries and Museums Emergency Relief), which Representatives Maloney and Nadler plan on introducing in the U.S. House, would allocate \$4 billion to the NEA, \$4 billion to the NEH, and \$6 billion to IMLS. We enthusiastically urge you to support this legislation!

To ensure more equitable distribution, we would like to see states receive a greater percentage of NEA and NEH funds so that they can make localized grantmaking decisions.

We also ask you to bolster federal funding for arts education, and we support your efforts to ensure that our children are safe if and when they return to school.

We thank you for your consideration of these issues, and we appreciate how hard you are working for all of us. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have any questions or ideas about how we can work together to support arts, culture, heritage, and the humanities in Oregon and across the United States of America.


Sincerely yours,



Nancy Golden
Board Chair



Sue Hildick
Senior Advisor



Jeff Hawthorne
Board Member
State of Oregon Advocacy Captain, Americans for the Arts