



SB 319 – Extends sunset for tax credit for contributions to Trust for Cultural Development

TESTIMONY BEFORE THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON BUSINESS, TRANSPORTATION
AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

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March 12, 2013

Chair Beyer, Vice-Chair Starr, and Committee Members,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the Oregon Cultural Trust and to express our support for SB 319 which would extend the tax credit for contributions to the Trust for Cultural Development. We represent University of Oregon programs that help fulfill the university's public mission to serve the interests of Oregonians through outreach and engagement. The Oregon Cultural Trust is a key partner in our work.

The Oregon Cultural Trust was founded in 2001 after the Oregon Legislature nearly unanimously passed a bill authorizing a tax credit which would benefit and build the Trust into what it is today. Since that time, \$12.7 million dollars have been distributed and 980 grants have been awarded, helping bolster 60,000 creative sector jobs sector in Oregon.

This trust helps fuel the efforts to bring early childhood literacy, dance, and art programs to underprivileged children. It helps fund small-town libraries and it helps preserve Oregon's priceless historic landmarks, buildings, and cemeteries. The Oregon Cultural Trust helps all citizens cherish and cultivate the very unique humanity that makes us all proud to be Oregonians.

The University of Oregon shares these goals and thanks to the Trust, is in an exceptionally fortunate position to help Oregon's culture thrive and flourish.

Specifically, with funding from the Trust, the **Oregon Bach Festival** is able to bring world-class musicians to share their art and provide educational opportunities with Oregonians through the 3-week summer festival and throughout the year. Special projects supported by the Trust have included three years of funding (\$5000/year) for broadcast of 17 performances (including premieres and renowned artists) as part of American Public Media's *Performance Today* programs and the European Broadcasting Union's exchange program for music world-wide; and a current project (\$12,000) in collaboration with the Portland Baroque Orchestra to bring opportunities to underserved communities. Additionally, through the Oregon Arts Commission, the Trust has contributed to ongoing funding for the Festival (\$12,000 annually); and to special

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cultural tourism outreach projects including a \$9000 contribution to OBF's initiative to reach diverse audiences in 2010, and the 2011 presentation of great works (\$6000) composed to celebrate historical heroines Joan of Arc, Dido and St. Cecilia.

Additionally, our museums have benefitted tremendously from the OCT. The **Jordan Schnitzer Museum of Art** is one of the elite art museums in the Pacific Northwest and exhibits diverse, breathtaking collections from around the world. In 2010, the Trust provided \$10,000 to create a search-engine that made the museum's art collection accessible to all citizens in Oregon and beyond. In 2013, the Trust gave another \$10,000 to fund a community outreach program designed to meet the needs of the area's Latino community. This program included organization-wide diversity training, a Latino Leadership council, and Spanish language training for museum staff and volunteers.

UO Museum of Natural and Cultural History protects and displays artifacts reflecting Oregon's history dating back thousands of years. The Oregon Cultural Trust has helped fund the construction of a state-of-the-art collections storage facility and a public galleria at the museum. This facility was designed to consolidate, upgrade, modernize, and safeguard Oregon's archaeological, anthropological, and paleontological collections from Oregon and the Pacific Northwest.

Another example of the Cultural Trust's impact involves the **University of Oregon Libraries**. The University of Oregon Libraries received an important grant through Oregon Parks and Recreation/Oregon Heritage Commission and the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office. The funding was provided through the Oregon Cultural Trust. The grant has helped us digitize the state's historical newspapers and make them available over the network. The program is part of the Library of Congress' Chronicling America Program. The project has recovered significant pieces of our state's "lost history," preserving it for the future and making it easily searchable. Users have come from 144 Oregon cities and towns, with especially heavy use from rural areas. One of the University of Oregon's missions is to serve the people of Oregon by enabling access to premier cultural education and programming. This mission would be made much more difficult if not for the Oregon Cultural Trust. The Trust provides valuable resources and support that can be rare in today's austere world. But programs benefited by the Trust, both at UO and elsewhere, nourish Oregon and her citizens in a more fundamental way. They nourish our sense of heritage, our sense of community, and our sense of humanity. Without programs such as these, Oregon would be much poorer indeed.

The University of Oregon is proud that the **Oregon Folklife Network** is based at UO. Formed in 2010, the mission of the Oregon Folklife Network is to make a meaningful difference in Oregon communities and Oregon Tribes by documenting, supporting, and celebrating our diverse cultural traditions and by empowering our tradition-bearers. It serves as a hub for statewide folklife activities in partnership with the Oregon Arts Commission, Oregon Cultural Trust, Oregon Historical Society, Oregon State Library, and Oregon Heritage Commission, along with community partners, including the Tribes, community-based cultural organizations, museums, regional cultural alliances, local arts agencies, K12 schools, universities and colleges, and public libraries.

We are greatly appreciative to this legislature for making the Oregon Cultural Trust possible over ten years ago. In that time the Trust has grown and helped countless programs succeed and offer their contribution to Oregon's cultural canvas. As one of those programs, the University of Oregon is proud of its contribution in preserving and promoting Oregon's culture and is very optimistic of its role in the future. Oregon deserves the Cultural Trust and UO is excited to help continue its mission. We sincerely hope that this program will continue with the success of SB 319 and we wholeheartedly endorse its passage.

Thank you for your time.