



Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon Legislative Summary

Of the 161 bills introduced for the 2024 session, we tracked four for the Cultural Advocacy Coalition of Oregon (CACO). In addition to the major bills of session mentioned above, a summary of some of the other important issues we engaged in is below.

FUNDING FOR THE SECTOR

In the 2023 interim, the CACO worked with Rep. Rob Nosse (D-Portland) to ensure that the arts and culture sector had a bill to fully fund the slate of Cultural Resources Economic Fund (CREF) projects that did not receive funding during the long session. Legislators are limited to bringing forward two bills during the short session, and Rep. Nosse committed to addressing the CREF slate. The remaining 14 projects on the slate totaled \$7.8 million in funding requests and were geographically distributed across the state.

Meanwhile, the arts and culture sector continued to struggle to recover from the long-lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Rep. Nosse, having heard from many organizations about this need, decided to include resiliency funding for the sector alongside the CREF asks in his bill, **HB 4124**. The entire package included \$27.4 million in funding for the sector, which was earmarked in the following way:

- \$7.8 million to fund the 14 unfunded CREF projects
- \$5.9 million in direct allocations to the anchor arts organizations to support their organization’s resiliency
- \$13.4 million in resiliency funding to be administered through a grant program to small and mid-size organizations across the state

To elevate the sector’s asks within both chambers, we introduced a companion bill in the Senate, **SB 1582**. This bill was championed by Sen. Lew Frederick (D-Portland) and included the exact same language and funding asks as those seen in HB 4124.

Both bills received early session hearings in their respective committees and there were over 60 pieces of testimony submitted in support of these asks. There was no known public opposition, and

oral testimony at the hearings distinguished between the capital and operational monies being requested, the dire financial realities facing many arts and culture organizations, and the need for state support. Over a dozen legislators even joined Rep. Nosse in the House hearing to speak in support, and some simply stood behind the dais in solidarity due to time constraints. Both bills passed out of their respective committees with bipartisan support to Ways and Means, where they awaited consideration by the state’s budget writers. It is unusual for both companion bills to move, and more common for one to be deemed the vehicle for session. The passage of both bills to Ways and Means was a strong showing of support and message to leadership that their members want to see funding for the sector.

Traditionally, the CREF slate has been funded through the Ways and Means process. Rather than requiring a bill to pass the funding asks, these asks have been included in the legislature’s end-of-session funding, fondly referred to as the “Christmas tree” bill. CACO anticipated that we could see funding pulled from our companion bills and inserted into this end-of-session funding bill. That’s exactly what happened.

The sector received the requested \$5.9 million in resiliency funding for the anchor arts organizations, as seen in the -2 amendment to **SB 5701**. Additionally, 13 of the 14 CREF projects were funded for a total of \$5.8 million. Unfortunately, the High Desert Museum, who sought \$2 million in capital funding to build a new wing of the museum and renovate their beloved permanent exhibition on Indigenous Plateau, did not receive their request. Feedback from leadership indicated that this was an intentional decision and expressed concern that the museum had previously received CREF funding and was also receiving resiliency funding this session. Despite CACO’s best attempts, legislative leadership was unwilling to budge in its decision to exclude the museum from the CREF slate.

SB 5701 passed through the Ways and Means committees and off both the Senate and House floors with bipartisan support. We anticipate the Governor will sign the bill. □

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