



HB 2291-2, MARCH 31, 2025

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SMALL BUSINESS AND TRADE

**TESTIMONY OF SYDNEY MEAD, SENIOR DIRECTOR OF DOWNTOWN PROGRAMS, DOWNTOWN
PORTLAND CLEAN & SAFE**

My name is Sydney Mead, and I'm here to represent Downtown Portland Clean & Safe, a non-profit working to provide enhanced cleaning, safety, and placemaking activities to Downtown Portland.

I have spent the last several years working to support small businesses and retailers, bring people back to downtown, and help tell a new story about Portland and Oregon—one that highlights our resiliency, creativity, and potential.

In my work, I've seen how vital placemaking and public space are to small-business recovery. From launching Coraline's Curious Cat Trail, which brought 135,000 individuals and families downtown last summer and fall, to hosting PDX Pop-up stores, which work with small businesses to launch temporary brick-and-mortar stores downtown, to the programming and management of Director Park, we are showing that when we invest in activation, people show up. During our legacy festival weekends, foot traffic jumps 14-22% from previous years.

But these moments need to be more than temporary. We need infrastructure that supports year-round vibrancy

Waterfront Park should be one of the city's and the state's greatest assets—not just a site for big summer events, but a well-managed, financially sustainable, and welcoming civic space every day of the year. We've seen firsthand how difficult it has become to plan and produce major festivals in the current structure. We're losing opportunities for economic growth, cultural connection, and city pride because the management model hasn't evolved.

HB 2291 is a smart step forward. It initiates a collaborative process—bringing together stakeholders to explore models working in other waterfront cities, like Milwaukee and Seattle. That kind of cross-sector problem solving is exactly what this state needs right now.

This bill is about more than just the park—it's about restoring confidence in our cities and state's ability to grow, host, and celebrate again. It's about supporting the small businesses that rely on foot traffic from festivals. And it's about signaling that we're serious about turning the page and writing a new chapter for both Portland and Oregon.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I urge your support for HB 2291.