

Good morning, Mr. Chair, committee members. My name is Lacey Leavitt and I am a filmmaker living and working in Washington State. When I say I'm a filmmaker, I mean that I make my living primarily as a feature film producer. I have shot six features in Washington in the last five years and four of them—Laggies starring Keira Knightly, Lucky Them with Toni Collette and Johnny Depp, Touchy Feely with Ellen Page, and Safety Not Guaranteed with Mark Duplass—utilized the motion picture competitiveness program. I credit the program for keeping our state film industry competitive, as three of those four projects were not originally set in WA but we were able to woo the productions here due to our incentive. I have not had to move to LA as my career has progressed, and for that I truly credit Washington Filmworks.

In the course of my career, I've shot in most of the state's counties, including Kittitas, Spokane, Pierce, Skagit, Kitsap, King and San Juan. But producing independent feature films is not all that I do, nor are all of the projects' impacts measured by the current JLARC report. I've also produced several commercials; interestingly the most elaborate production and most viewed end product was for a spot that was only distributed online, which of course speaks to the always-evolving distribution landscape.

Speaking of this changing landscape, I am also developing several web series. One of these, Automata, is based on a web comic by the Washington-based juggernaut Penny Arcade. They have a rabid online following of their comics, podcasts and online content; as many as 3.5 million unique readers monthly. They also host a video game convention that brings 70,000 attendees over Labor Day weekend at the Washington State Convention. This is the first time that they're adapting one of their comic properties and this project has Washington Filmworks' support through their Innovation Lab program. It's that kind of investment not only in our current circumstance, but also in where the industry is headed, that should be recognized and applauded.

And speaking of the future, I believe that Washington State is uniquely positioned to be a world leader in the upcoming Virtual Reality industry. VR is an emerging technology that puts users inside the story world, where the events are literally happening all around you. This is the future of the entertainment industry. The lines between film, series and video games will continue to blur and this industry will be huge in the coming years. Oculus Rift (owned by Facebook), Valve (the Bellevue video game company behind the Steam and Vive platforms), and HBO transmedia all have Washington-based offices because of our high concentration of developers and creative crew, but if we do not retain and develop our filmmaking talent, I can assure you that Los Angeles and Silicon Valley will be happy to take the lead instead. I am developing several immersive 360 and VR projects because I believe in this future, and know we currently have the talent to move in that direction. I urge you to consider the economic impact of this rapidly changing landscape and how it might be measured and assigned value.

Commissioners, I consider you all to be storytellers as well. And just as filmmakers tell a specific story through scripting and editing a film, data-driven storytelling can be highly subjective when looking through a narrow set of criteria. For example, the last JLARC review of this program was incredibly complimentary to the MPCP, and I've been using quotes from that review to explain this program's effectiveness to people over the last several years. I urge you to take a step back and look at the entire picture of Washington's film industry and the motion picture competitiveness program, both for the amazing creative economy that we currently have and for the enormous potential in the future of the storytelling industry.

Please keep in mind that film, video games and television are among the top U.S. exports in the global economy. Locally, SeaTac airport is *still* selling Sleepless in Seattle merchandise, over 20 years after it was in theaters, and currently North Bend is hosting tourists from all over the world who are eager to get a glimpse of the Twin Peaks production. I urge you to think about how we can measure and grow the true financial story of our state's creative economy. Thank you.