For Immediate Release
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Nine Oregon high school students advance to March 13 state Poetry Out Loud competition

Salem, Oregon – Regional Poetry Out Loud competitions held in Medford and Salem on Saturday identified the nine Oregon high school students who are invited to compete for the 2020 state title on Friday, March 13. The contests also identified two alternates should any student be unable to attend the state contest.

Poetry Out Loud is a national contest for high school students, organized in Oregon by the Oregon Arts Commission in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Arts and the Poetry Foundation. Participants memorize and present poems, practicing public performance skills while exploring the complexity of poetry. Winners of school competitions advance to regional contests for an opportunity to compete at the state contest; the state champion is invited to advance to the national competition.

The state contestants from the Medford Regional Contest (listed with their schools and hometowns) are: Hannah Oberman from Oakland High School, Oakland; Poppy Hendrickson from Cascade Christian High School, Medford; Tabarjah Neal from Oregon Connections Academy, Klamath Falls; and alternate Clara Bennett, Crater High School, Central Point.

State contestants selected at the Salem Regional Contest are: Christina Brennan, K12 International Academy, Happy Valley; Olyvia Oeverman, St. Stephen’s Academy, Tigard; Faith Palma, Veritas School, Dundee; Gabriella Shurtcliff, Summit High School, Bend; Sevyn South, Village Home, Portland; Alejandra Ortega, Sandy High School, Sandy; and alternate Jamila Walker, Oregon School for the Deaf, Salem.

“After 15 years of Poetry Out Loud in Oregon, we continue to see an impressive caliber of performances from students. We are thrilled to welcome these nine outstanding presenters to the state event,” said Deb Vaughn, the Arts Commission’s arts education/Poetry Out Loud coordinator.
The State Contest is scheduled from 5 to 7:30 p.m. in Salem's Allied Video Productions Studio (2121 Front St NE); the event will be sign interpreted. The winner will be invited to advance to the national Poetry Out Loud competition, scheduled for April 27-29 in Washington, D.C.

**Editor's note:** Photos and bio information are available upon request.

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The Oregon Arts Commission provides leadership, funding and arts programs through its grants, special initiatives and services. Nine commissioners, appointed by the Governor, determine arts needs and establish policies for public support of the arts. The Arts Commission became part of Business Oregon (formerly Oregon Economic and Community Development Department) in 1993, in recognition of the expanding role the arts play in the broader social, economic and educational arenas of Oregon communities. In 2003, the Oregon legislature moved the operations of the Oregon Cultural Trust to the Arts Commission, streamlining operations and making use of the Commission’s expertise in grantmaking, arts and cultural information and community cultural development.

The Arts Commission is supported with general funds appropriated by the Oregon legislature and with federal funds from the National Endowment for the Arts as well as funds from the Oregon Cultural Trust. More information about the Oregon Arts Commission is available online at: [www.oregonartscommission.org](http://www.oregonartscommission.org).