Eleven Oregon high school students advance to
March 11 Poetry Out Loud State Contest;
Winner to represent Oregon at National Contest

Salem, Oregon – Eleven Oregon high school students who won their school Poetry Out Loud contests will compete for the state championship at the 2022 Oregon Virtual Poetry Out Loud State Contest at 5 p.m. on Friday, March 11. The contest will be streamed live on the Oregon Arts Commission’s Facebook page and YouTube Channel.

The host of the 2022 Oregon State Contest will be Joaquin Lopez, a performing artist, musician and mental health counselor whose work is grounded in personal transformation, self-expression and Latino Queer identity. Lopez currently serves as co-Creative Laureate of Portland.

The students competing for the state championship are: Clara Bennett, Crater High School, Central Point; Cecily Cooper, Crook County High School, Prineville; Maria Daniels, St. Stephen’s Academy, Beaverton; Trayshun Holmes-Gournaris, Oregon School for the Deaf, Salem; Juwon Kim, Lakeridge High School, Lake Oswego; Alyssia Menezes, Lincoln High School, Portland; Elena Morris, Oregon Charter Academy, Mill City; Ava Neudeck, West Linn High School, West Linn; Mariah Reynolds, Redmond High School, Redmond; Auria Vallloton, Oakland High School, Oakland; and Willa Wise, Grant High School, Portland.

Poetry Out Loud is a national recitation contest for high school students, organized in Oregon by the Oregon Arts Commission in collaboration with the NEA and the Poetry Foundation. Participants memorize and present poems, practicing public speaking skills while exploring the complexity of poetry.

The 2022 Poetry Out Loud State Contest is again being conducted virtually to ensure the safety and health of participating students and staff. The decision was based on
guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the World Health Organization and General Counsel for the National Endowment for the Arts.

Judges for the State Contest are Subashini Ganesan, an artist, arts administrator and former Creative Laureate of Portland; Jonathan Hill, a cartoonist, illustrator and educator; André Middleton, the founder and executive director of Friends of Noise; Juan Antonio Trujillio, a recently retired Oregon State University professor and co-organizer of the Portland-based Tag! Queer Shorts Festival; and Vicky Falcon Vazquez, a poet, activist and educator who works at the intersection of social, cultural and gender issues.

Non-scoring respondent judges, who will provide written feedback to the students on their performances, are Amy Botula, an advocate, writer and teacher; Jillian Frakes, a middle school language arts teacher and Oregon’s 2012 Poetry Out Loud state champion; and Tony Fuemmeler, a theater artist exploring transformation, expression and articulation through masks and puppetry.

The students’ performances will be judged on physical presence; voice and articulation; dramatic appropriateness; evidence of understanding; overall performance and accuracy.

Scores will determine the state champion and a runner up. The champion will be invited to compete in the National Poetry Out Loud Semifinals on May 1; the top nine students will advance to the National Finals on June 5.

Editor's note: Short student bios and photos are available on 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.