

In an effort to enforce more ethical hiring practices for rideshare services, the California legislature passed legislation that impacts all gig workers, including artists. This legislation, California Assembly Bill 5 (AB-5), changes the way individuals qualify to work as independent contractors. **The unintended consequence of this legislation is that it threatens to shut down many, if not all, small professional non-profit theatres.**

The Sierra Madre Playhouse (SMP) has operated with a small but dedicated staff - only a limited number of whom are paid. (Managing Director Estelle Campbell and Artistic Director Christian Lebrano take NO salaries). Before AB-5, we were able to negotiate modest independent contractor fees with all of the non-union artists on our production teams. Under AB-5, this is no longer possible. We must now hire any person who works in any capacity on any production as an employee, paying them minimum wage (at least), as well as all payroll taxes.

So, the musician who substitutes for one performance, the lighting designer who hangs and focuses lights, or the director who prepares a show for several months, all must be placed on employment contracts and paid an hourly wage. Under this legislation, SMP would go from being an organization with very few employees to an organization with over 100 employees each year. There is no way for SMP to manage such a transition -- the additional payroll taxes alone would be staggering.

I do not believe that the California legislature intended to put small tax-exempt organizations at risk. We exist to serve the public good -- in our case, the good of the artists who choose to work with us and the good of the extraordinarily diverse group of patrons whom we consider family. While we support the idea that all human beings deserve a living wage, our purpose at SMP is not commercial. We do not make much money: our annual ticket revenue and generous donations from our supporters cannot pay for all our programming AND support 100+ employees making minimum wage -- even if they are part-time employees. The support that we provide our community is not financial. But it is still essential; we offer our artists the opportunity to develop or practice their craft with talented peers, and we provide our patrons with the opportunity to access wonderful, affordable theatre.

**Please join us in sending a pre-written letter to your State Assembly member and State Senator, asking that they vote to exempt small non-profit theatres from AB-5.**

The below link will take you to a form that does this for you in three easy steps:

1. ENTER YOUR RETURN ADDRESS (the form automatically addresses the letter to your elected representatives)
2. Hit START WRITING
3. Hit SEND LETTER

If you have a little more time, the standard letter that is provided in the form can be edited. Personal stories are so important. If you would like to share yours, please insert it after the line "Please vote to save California's small non-profit theatres!" But if you don't have time, simply hitting SEND is just fine.

HERE IS THE LINK TO HELP SAVE OUR THEATRES: <https://tplla.org/save-our-theaters/>

On behalf of all of us here at SMP and in the broader theatrical community, thank you for your ongoing support. We wouldn't be here without you.



Christian Lebano  
Artistic Director



Estelle Campbell  
Managing Director



David Gordon  
President