

## **FRIENDS of the BARNES FOUNDATION**

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### **For Immediate Release**

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### **FRIENDS OF THE BARNES FOUNDATION TO DRPA: THE BARNES MOVE IS *NOT* REGIONAL ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT**

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(MERION STATION, May 15) On May 20, representatives of Friends of the Barnes Foundation will appear before the Delaware River Port Authority (DRPA) Commissioners to urge reconsideration of the DRPA's \$500,000 pledge toward the planned dismantling and removal of the Barnes Foundation art collection from its internationally-revered home in Merion, Pennsylvania to a tourism venue five miles away in Philadelphia. The project has generated unprecedented international criticism both for its planned destruction of an incomparable aesthetic experience as well as its murky political origins.

The request stems from the absence of evidence that the Philadelphia Barnes venture meets the DRPA's own guidelines for economic development projects. In addition, circumstances have changed significantly from when the DRPA pledged the funds in 2003, including the Barnes' documented eligibility as a National Historic Landmark, which opens up new possibilities for fundraising, and the 125% increase in visitation approved by Lower Merion Township. The current economic crisis, escalating construction costs, and the financial distress throughout the cultural community call into question whether the move is financially viable in the short term and whether the project will be a continuing drain on the region's stressed financial resources. Friends of the Barnes Foundation supports the plan to keep the Barnes intact in Merion with a link to the site to Philadelphia via a shuttle bus from the Philadelphia Museum of Art.

**Congressman Jim Gerlach represents the district in which the Barnes Foundation resides and is a longtime supporter of preservation of the Barnes Foundation in Merion.** "The DRPA is squandering precious financial resources on a move that poses a tremendous risk to the long-term financial stability of the Barnes," Gerlach said. "I would urge the Authority to reconsider its decision due to the lack of proof that relocating this local treasure will have any long-term benefits."

Friends of the Barnes Foundation spokesperson, Sandra Gross Bressler, said of the upcoming presentation, "We are pleased to have the opportunity to bring before the Commissioners of the Delaware River Port Authority the important and compelling arguments for reconsideration of their earlier pledge of funds to move the Barnes art collection to Philadelphia. Rather than being an economic development project for the region, the move would destroy a unique cultural site revered throughout the world. What is the sense of spending hundreds of millions of dollars to move an art collection a mere five miles, and ending up with a replica of the magnificent original - in effect getting less by spending more? Our request is that DRPA reallocate the \$500,000 contribution to the Barnes move for projects that will truly benefit the region."

Commenting on the Delaware River Port Authority's pledge of financial support for the highly controversial project, Rutgers University Professor Emeritus of Economics Matityahu Marcus, Ph.D. said, "If the DRPA is to properly and objectively allocate limited public resources among competing regional projects, it cannot merely focus on the impact of constructing a Philadelphia Barnes facility; it must also consider the adverse regional impact of dismantling the existing Merion complex. Only after both impacts are properly evaluated, can the DRPA determine whether the net benefits of the move justify the contemplated the high capital costs which the plans will impose. This evaluation can be undertaken using well-established methods in regional economic science for determining the proper allocation of public funds. To date, the DRPA has not indicated that such studies have been undertaken. Because the Barnes in Merion is a regional cultural asset of extraordinary value and given the DRPA's stated commitment to be guided by well-defined, measureable economic criteria that are supported by clear evidence, it is particularly important that the DRPA undertake such studies and make them available to the public ."

For more information, go to [www.barnesfriends.org](http://www.barnesfriends.org)

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