

FRIENDS OF THE BARNES FOUNDATION

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Statement

It would not take much effort or money to honor the will and legacy of Albert C. Barnes by preserving the Barnes Foundation as a rare and unique place in Merion, Pennsylvania.

Although the Barnes Foundation has great significance to our shared cultural heritage, it is a place of relatively moderate financial needs in comparison to its vast assets. But it does absolutely require that those responsible for it want to honor that legacy rather than exploit its treasured art collection for commercial and political motivations.

The Trustees of the Barnes Foundation and the Pennsylvania Attorney General have an absolute obligation to fulfill the social contract that passes the Barnes cultural patrimony intact to future generations. That patrimony is not the art collection alone. It is not the educational programs alone, as extraordinary as they might be. The patrimony is the integrated, unified Merion complex that includes the art collection, the educational programs, the gallery building, and the 12-acre arboretum that embody the life's work of Dr. Barnes and his wife, Laura Barnes.

The reports made available today by Professors Abruzzo, Janes, and Marcus show clearly that the Barnes Foundation in Merion was sustainable at the time of the earlier hearings. They explain that it was sustainable, not through extraordinary means, but through minimal good practices of a well-intentioned Board and competent administration. They also explain how the Barnes Foundation in Merion could be a robust cultural institution for the long-term through perfectly standard operating procedures.

The statements of historic preservation professionals Emily Cooperman, Ph.D. and Hyman Myers, FAIA re-affirm earlier findings about the immense historic significance of the Barnes Foundation in Merion. Left intact, the monumental site has all that could be desired in a cultural asset for the region and the nation.

A full and fair hearing would allow these facts to be brought to the attention of the Court. The Attorney General has not acted as Pares Patriae for the Barnes Foundation. Instead, he has acted as a handmaiden to those who manipulated the move. All the Barnes Foundation needs is stewards who fully understand, embrace, and honor it.