

Christopher Brownawell
Farnsworth Art Museum, Rockland, ME
LD 912

Chair Rotundo, Chair Sachs, and honorable members of the committee,

Thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of LD 912 and LD 1163. My name is Christopher Brownawell and I am the Director of the Farnsworth Art Museum in Rockland, Maine. As Director of an art museum with two historic structures, I value the commitment to historic preservation demonstrated in these two bills.

The Olson House, a National Historic Site in Cushing, Maine, offers the incredible opportunity to connect with midcoast Maine's deep artistic traditions and explore the ways that historic sites inspire some of the nation's greatest artists. The subject of more than 300 works of art by Andrew Wyeth, the Olson House is one of the most recognized structures in all of art. Sadly, due to structural issues and ongoing preservation work, the house is currently closed to the public.

The Museum also owns The Farnsworth Homestead, which is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Built in 1854 by William A. Farnsworth, it is an excellent example of Greek Revival architecture and was the home of Lucy Farnsworth, the museum's founder.

The Museum contributes to the well-being of our communities and the people who live in them by inspiring creativity and a sense of connectedness that can help people find a voice for self-expression, increase their ability to overcome adversity, and open their hearts to the experiences and perspectives of others. The Farnsworth contributes to community development and economic progress as a major tourist destination and anchor of an energetic arts district. In response to community needs, the Museum has recently shifted to a more community-focused approach. Studies link museum visits to higher levels of civic pride, health, self-esteem, a sense of connectedness, and reduced symptoms of anxiety and depression. We are working with community partners to support local artists and promote social cohesion and cross-cultural understanding, providing workshops for adults and youth and professional development for teachers.

Investment in our cultural infrastructure is paramount to the preservation and survival of our state's historic sites. Investment in Maine's historic and cultural facilities is an investment in the health and well-being of its people.

Thank you,
Christopher Brownawell
Director, Farnsworth Art Museum