

H 898

My name is Chelsea Boehm and I am testifying as a private citizen. I want to make sure that the record reflects that this testimony is my own and does represent the views of my employer.

I work in the historic preservation field – where it is my responsibility to advocate for archaeological and historical resources – such as old buildings, neighborhoods, bridges, and archaeological sites. I frequently work with the State Historic Office. In the years that I have collaborated with SHPO, they have always responded to requests quickly and been willing to help. I have worked with SHPO on dozens of projects that require Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act mitigation – or when SHPO has to review applications that require federal permits, use federal dollars, or include federal property – and that work is always completed well before the deadline. These mitigation conversations are vital for my community, as we are able to advocate for our local historical and archaeological resources and get SHPO’s support when we do so. Just in the last year, our community has received more than \$50,000 in mitigation funds that allow for us to protect historical and archaeological resources, when we know development is going to damage them. In addition, our county benefits each year from Certified Local Government funds, via SHPO’s grant program.

Removing SHPO from the Idaho State Historical Society will disrupt the review processes that are already in place. It does not make sense to try to rework a system that functions. In the House Business Committee meeting last week, there were many conversations about ethics. I have no doubt that the SHPO staff are ethical people – and they have proven time and again their dedication to preserve Idaho’s history. But there is a clear conflict of interest that will change the way SHPO does their work. Please take a moment to think about what it means to move an office whose obligation it is to minimize damage to historical and archaeological resources, and that often means making suggestions that developers may not like – to a department that seeks to advance energy development. It is clear to those testifying today, and hopefully to you, senators, that this puts SHPO in a compromised position where they may be forced to make decisions to the benefit of developers, and at the expense of historical and archaeological resources.