

DIAMOND GULCH LLC

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February 18, 2015

To: Members of Senate Finance and Claims Committee

Support: SB 264 (Redistribute Sales and Use Tax: Historic Preservation)

Members of the Committee:

My Name is Frank Crowley, and I am the Operating Manager of Diamond Gulch LLC, which owns the historic Diamond Block building in downtown Helena.

The Diamond Block was completed in 1889, the same year as the completion of the Capitol Building. Our LLC purchased the Diamond Block in 1998 and in the last 16 years we have expended substantial amounts of funds on numerous badly needed projects including major expenditures on replacement of all the windows on the 6th Avenue side of the building, and replacement of the HVAC system on the roof of the system. Some of this vital work was only performed because we received funding through a one-time only historic preservation grant which we applied for and were fortunate to receive several years ago.

I can assure you that throughout most of the year, we see tourists stopping to admire and photograph the Diamond Block and its unique historic copper-clad oriel bay windows, each of which has a large glass diamond embedded in it, and also the balconies covered by arches – the entire smoky-red building was made from locally quarried stone. The Diamond Block and two other historic buildings in Helena were the imaginative work of Helena architect James Stranahan. It has also been my pleasure to give many tours of the building and its massive stone basement, to classes of students from local schools who take video and write papers about the Diamond Block. I can also assure you that our building is functional and sturdy despite its 125 years.

I am aware of many other historic buildings in Helena and elsewhere in Montana which badly need restoration. So often the economics of building ownership and maintenance do not allow for the capitalization of projects necessary to preserve the historic richness of our older buildings. As one of the owners of an historic building, I can say that the availability of grants or other funding for historic preservation may be the best and last tool the public has to help prevent the loss of these irreplaceable cultural assets – which inform us of our history and experience, and which make Helena and other cities and towns the special places they are to live in, and visit.

Thank you.



SENATE CHANGE & CLAIMS

Form No. _____

Date _____

Bill No. _____

EXHIBIT NO.

DATE 2.19.15

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