

Testimony in support of HB 6119

Thank you for this opportunity to speak in support of HB 6119, as well as to all those with us today for the ongoing public service to our State. I am D.C. FS of Stonington.

Before being elected First Selectman of Stonington, I served on our Board of Finance, which gave me a deep appreciation for how important and challenging it is to put forward a fiscally prudent budget.

An increase in one area of our budget meant a decrease to another. While at face value, requesting an additional 15% of room occupancy tax revenue go towards tourism funds means 15% will need to be reduced else where, we need to ensure we are looking at the bigger picture.

What is being discussed today is not an additional expense, but rather an investment. An investment that study after study, both in CT and around the country, has been show to have an outstanding ROI. Tourism funding is unique in that it doesn't compete with priority programs; it helps pay for them.

A [2012 study](#) by the State of CT conducted by Longwoods International showed that for every dollar spent on marketing, \$3 was generated in increased tax revenue. And it is not just CT, a [2018 Florida study](#) looked at state spending on tourism marking over a three-year period and found for every \$1 spent, it generated \$3.27. Tourism marketing, done right, will not just pay for itself, it will increase tax revenue that can be used for other areas of need.

Another way to look at this, based on a [2017 study on the Economic Impact of Tourism in Connecticut](#), is that each household in Connecticut would need to be taxed an additional \$705 to replace the state and local taxes generated by visitors in 2017.

Looking across that nation, according to a [study by US Travel Association in 2013](#), travel and tourism generated \$60.9 billion in tax revenues to state and local governments. This \$60.9 billion is enough to cover the wages of all police officers and firefighters in the entire nation, or the salaries of nearly 100 percent of all secondary school teachers in all 50 states.

If we fail to invest, we will lose market share to our competitors, as many of our neighboring states understand the **strong return on investment that tourism marketing can bring.**

[The Connecticut Office of Tourism's 2018 Tourism Marketing Review](#) shared that people who saw their advertising were 6.4 times more likely to visit the state and stayed 3.5 times longer.

Our local businesses and organizations cannot advertise in expensive markets like NY and Boston without support from the State. We see how positive the impact can be, we just need to make the investment.

Beyond our direct ROI, Tourism is the 8th largest employer in CT. And looking at Tourism, Arts and culture combined these industries represents 15% of CT's economy, but also so much more.

They are an integral part of the quality of life that draws people not only to visit our great State, but also to live here- to start their careers, raise a family or retire here. These are also industries that has been hard hit by the pandemic.

Making the changes passed in this bill will not only help the nearly 180,000 people that were employed in these industries collectively, but will help ensure that these important businesses and organizations remain a vibrant part of the fabric of our shared communities. This bill will not only help the larger cities across our state, but also the smaller towns and villages. It will help those from the NW corner all the way down to the SE corner.

I thank you for your time and consideration.