

February 8, 2021

Honorable Senator Joan V. Hatley, Co-Chair
Honorable Senator Christine Cohen, Vice Chair
Honorable Representative Caroline Simmons, Co-Chair
Honorable Representative Kara Rochelle, Vice Chair
Committee on Commerce
General Assembly
State of Connecticut

**Re: Proposed Bill Number 6119
An Act Concerning Arts, Culture and Tourism Funding**

Dear Senators Hatley and Cohen and Representatives Simmons and Rochelle:

As some of the largest attractions in the State of Connecticut and accredited zoos and aquariums, we are writing to support Proposed Bill Number 6119, "An Act Concerning Arts, Culture, and Tourism Funding."

Together, our institutions generate more than \$250 million annually to the State of Connecticut's \$16 billion tourism economy. We are the anchors of this economy, attracting visitors to Connecticut who stay in hotels, rent vehicles, dine in restaurants and shop in local retail establishments.

The Connecticut tourism sector generates nearly \$1 billion in tax revenue and represents over 5% of the workforce or 84,000 jobs. Covid-19 has caused considerable economic harm to our organizations and to the entire tourism economy.

State investment in tourism marketing has been proven to have significant return on investment. In 2018, research conducted for the State showed that individuals exposed to State led digital advertising in the New York City market were six times more likely to visit Connecticut and stay 3.5 times longer than those who were not.

The tourism industry desperately needs investment by the State to jumpstart visitation this year. The current level of investment in state marketing is amongst the lowest in the nation and New England. As people begin to return to travelling as Covid-19 subsides, other states will be aggressively marketing for their tourism dollars. Connecticut should not be left behind.

Proposed Bill Number 6119 is a fair way to develop a sustainable statewide marketing effort. In addition to the language of the Bill, we urge the General Assembly to establish a minimum annual baseline funding for tourism of no less than \$10 million.

Sincerely,

Stephen M. Coan
President and CEO
Mystic Aquarium

Greg Dancho
President and CEO
Beardsley Zoo

Jason Patlis
President and CEO
Maritime Aquarium

Copy:

Honorable Representative Amy Morrin Bello
Honorable Senator Will Haskell
Honorable Representative Josh Elliott
Honorable Representative Christine Goupil
Honorable Representative Robin E. Comey
Honorable Representative Robyn A. Porter
Honorable Representative Gary A. Turco
Honorable Representative Frank Smith



General Assembly

January Session, 2021

Proposed Bill No. 6119

LCO No. 1998



Referred to Committee on COMMERCE

Introduced by:
REP. PARKER, 101st Dist.

AN ACT CONCERNING ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM FUNDING.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

- 1 That the general statutes be amended to (1) increase, from ten per cent
- 2 to twenty-five per cent, the portion of room occupancy tax revenue
- 3 directed to the Tourism Fund each quarter, (2) require that forty per cent
- 4 of money in the tourism fund be allocated to arts and culture and sixty
- 5 per cent of such money be allocated to tourism, (3) change the name of
- 6 the Tourism Fund to the Arts, Culture and Tourism Fund, and (4)
- 7 change the name of the "Statewide Marketing" budget line to "Statewide
- 8 Tourism Marketing".

Statement of Purpose:

To strengthen the arts, culture, and tourism sector in Connecticut by directing additional funds into the Tourism Fund, renaming the fund to better represent the full scope of the sector and ensuring equitable funding among arts, culture, and tourism initiatives.