

February 18, 2021

Dear House Appropriations Committee:

I write to you as president of one of the largest tourism drivers in the State of Connecticut. Mystic Seaport Museum has an international reputation as one of the leading maritime museums in the world, drawing over 250,000 visitors from within Connecticut, across the country, and around the globe per annum. As we begin to overcome the devastating impact of the pandemic and look ahead to a time when travel and crowds are once again deemed safe, we must be prepared to welcome a public that is desperate to return to normal. It is imperative that we do not miss the opportunity to make Connecticut a key destination state as people once again resume their travel planning.

While Connecticut is not generally thought of as a tourism destination, it should be given its close proximity to the high-density areas of New York City and Massachusetts. However, the New York City and Boston media markets are two of the most expensive advertising markets in the country, making it difficult for individual businesses of any size to gain traction in these key areas. This is where the State effort is crucial. By advertising where others in the State cannot, the Connecticut Office of Tourism (COT) can boost awareness and drive visitation. It is an essential component of growing tourism in Connecticut.

Connecticut lags behind all of its neighbors when it comes to support of marketing for tourism. Rhode Island budgeted over \$5 million for tourism marketing in 2020 – more than double Connecticut's commitment! New York has an annual budget of \$60 million. These states see the value in marketing their tourism assets. If Connecticut fails to adopt that view and make us more competitive in the region, the tourists will spend their money in the states that have invested in them.

Increased marketing is an investment, not a cost. Increased visitation directly boosts tax receipts. A study by the COT indicated that people who saw their advertising were 6.4 times more likely to visit the State and were inclined to stay 3.5 times longer. Furthermore, every dollar spent on marketing generated \$3 in increased tax revenue. Tourism marketing, if done right, will more than pay for itself by increasing tax revenue for the General Fund, and will be self-sustaining through increased receipts of the hotel lodging tax. Supporting the marketing fund is, simply, good economics.

I ask that you please support HB 6119 and help businesses such as mine to continue to be an asset to the economy as we emerge from COVID.

Sincerely,

Peter Armstrong

President
Mystic Seaport Museum