

For the
Record

Senator
Representative
Members of the Appropriations Committee

My name is Tony Sheridan President of the Chamber of Commerce of Eastern Connecticut and a member of the Greater Mystic Visitors Bureau. The Chamber enjoys a membership of approximately 1600 companies many of whom are businesses directly involved in the tourism business and or are impacted by it. I am here to ask that you find a way to support funding for the GMVB a public private model that works well for the travel and leisure industry in Connecticut.

I was co-chair of the Jobs/Economic Development committee appointed by Governor Malloy. The committee's charge was to solicit ideas for improving the state's economy for submittal to the governor's policy committee for consideration by the new administration. The report recommended that the tourism districts be phased out and that a more unified central approach be considered instead. The consensus was that for too long the state has operated in silos when it comes to economic development.

A more central approach to advertising the economic development interests, especially the travel and leisure industry, headed by the governor's office would begin to present the state to the outside world in a more unified and cohesive fashion and would reverse the multi year decline in jobs and economic development we have witnessed.

Culture and tourism is extremely important to our economic base. It employs thousands of Connecticut residents and contributes significant revenues to the state coffers. As you deliberate I recommend that you take your time to consider how best can we move forward with funding for this important economic entity. This is a time to be creative with our limited resources and to present the state in a welcoming way in a very competitive environment.

The question that the individuals who recommended the phasing out of the districts posed is, is it necessary to fund three districts in order to fund a successful public private partnership such as GMVB. Your challenge is to recommend a system of support for the travel and leisure industry that takes into consideration modern communication outlets that will present a unified approach to educating the outside world on the wonderful opportunities that are available in Connecticut.


Pres. CEO
Chamber of Commerce E.C.T.