

**JILL FRITZSCHE**

**HB 6350- AN ACT CONCERNING THE BUDGET FOR BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2015 AND OTHER PROVISIONS RELATING TO  
REVENUE**

Senator Harp, Rep. Walker and esteemed members of the appropriations committee, my name is Jill Fritzsche and I am the owner of Canterbury Antiques and a representative of the Canterbury Economic Development Commission and the Eastern Regional Tourism District.

I am here tonight to testify on the Dept. of Economic and Community Development Budget, in particular to express my **opposition** to the elimination of the tourism districts.

Early in 2005 I decided to open my second business in Connecticut, my first in the retail sector. Without a lot of experience in the retail sector I jumped right in sink or swim. I opened my business with little cash reserves and virtually no advertising budget. Soon after a curious thing began to happen. Customers from all over New England were coming through my doors in the quiet corner of Canterbury, Connecticut. How was this happening? I had to ask my customers how they found me! To my surprise it was through the Eastern Regional Tourism District. It was the district that was supplying content

to the Mystic.org website and had published an *Antiques, Boutiques and Uniques* shopping guide to promote regional tourism.

With my limited understanding of the retail business world I knew two things. Business is divided into two worlds: goods and services or tourism. Goods and services are a commodity that can be outsourced and moved but tourism is a permanent concept. I quickly realized even though I was selling goods I could be and was part of the tourism world.

Tourism in Connecticut has its own ecosystem and I wanted to be involved. The system is dependent on each other for its survival. As I got involved I was educated on what exactly a tourism district does. The most important role is it represents all the interests of a particular region, not just one museum, program, park or theater but the whole region. As a result, for example, in the quiet corner of Connecticut the tourism industry is responsible for generating a quarter of a billion dollars in economic impact and bringing in 1.8 million tourists. And for every dollar spent there was a fifty dollar return to the regions economy.

The districts work collaboratively with public and private institutions, individual businesses as well as municipal entities. They do not have a self serving interest for public funding, they

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have a regional and economic interest in sharing the funding to promote growth in our state economy.

Connecticut is the gateway to New England and it is imperative we do not become a drive thru state. We need to nurture and grow our tourism business now. Tourism is a fixed commodity, as businesses and manufacturing are leaving the state in search of cheaper pastures, tourism is here to stay. Our shorelines, green open spaces, unique historical and cultural gemstones are worth our investment and provide us with long term fiscal health.

Finally, as a business owner I fully understand the concept of balancing a budget and reducing costs, but I would not dream of cutting an area of cash flow deposits. I do not know of another area in the state's budget that offers this kind of return to investment, as tourism provides. Why get rid of our income producing assets? The tourist districts are not broken they are thriving in providing this state with maximum benefit with minimal cost.

The districts are the engines that pull the tourism industry, they are the solution to economic recovery!

I urge you to evaluate and review the impact of your choices on the overall health of our tourism ecosystem. We need to fund the tourism districts to help regain the fiscal health of our state.

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On a lighter note, since my business started in 2005 there has been at least six other tourism related businesses create in Canterbury due to the increased volume of visitors. We have the tourism districts to thank for this traffic!

I thank you for your time, consideration and service.

Respectfully,

Jill Fritzsche