

Northwest Connecticut Economic Development Corporation

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Wednesday, February 21, 2013

Dear Senator Harp, Representative Walker and distinguished members of the Appropriations Committee,

While everyone is well aware of the state's current fiscal situation and appreciates the difficulty of prioritizing reductions to create a balanced budget, the regional tourism districts should be retained since they generate substantial revenue for the state.

The commonly agreed upon return in investment in tourism is 7-1 (\$7 dollars added to the state's economy for every \$1 dollar invested). The three tourism districts are the backbone of the current system. The state-wide tourism office had been virtually eliminated a few years ago and only with support from the regional tourism districts was it able to become operational again.

Eliminating the districts would also eliminate the bottom up approach that the regional tourism districts have established. Many of the local tourist attractions and venues have a strong connection with the regional tourism bureaus because they understand and support their unique characteristics.

The experience of the current staff members in the regional tourism bureaus is impressive. Based on their intimate knowledge of their regions, they work closely with multiple international organizations to attract visitors to our state from all over the world.

House Bills 6350 and 6354 would place Connecticut at a severe economic disadvantage when competing with other states to attract visitors. Visitors want detailed information about where to stay, where to eat, and what to see. The regional districts are providing the detail that visitors are requesting. It's one thing to create a web site for visitors, it's far more important to continually update the site with current and up to date information. I can't imagine anyway that a centrally located tourism office would be able to provide the detail currently being provided by the regional tourism bureaus.

I urge you to support the existing tourism districts and provide the financial support necessary to enable them to continue to generate a positive revenue stream for the state.

Sincerely,

Doug Parker

President/Executive Director

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