

Testimony by
Elaine Klevens
Owner of the Riverwind Inn
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Senator Bye, Representative Walker and Members of the Committee, I am testifying today to express my opposition to the elimination of the tourism districts and the drastic cuts that have been proposed to the tourism budget.

When the budget was increased in 2013 and TV ads were showing the different venues the state offered, the next week I received a call from someone in MA who had seen the ad for the Essex Steam Train. Their comment to me was "I never knew CT offered so much by way of places to visit". I booked them a room and they came and were pleasantly surprised by our state.

I know that in 2014 \$811.8 million in tax revenue for state and local governments was generated by the lodging industry in CT. The \$12 million budget has allowed Connecticut to re-establish its brand and draw "other people's money" to Connecticut. That \$12 million is a very small percentage of the tax revenue collected and I implore you not to cut this budget.

Governor Malloy himself spoke at the CT Lodging Association Annual Meeting this past Fall and praised the Lodging Industry for its job creation (11,508 lodging jobs in 2014) and acknowledged that the dollars he supported being spent on tourism were having a major effect. In fact, he suggested that we "ask for more" in this year's budget. By cutting the tourism budget, you are hurting many businesses throughout the state, all which produce revenue, through taxes, to the state.

Cutting the tourism budget makes no sense since helps produce revenue for the state, not a needless expense like cutting trees on Route 9. Connecticut needs to stop being a "drive through" state by attracting tourists to the state by showing them, through advertising, the positive, beautiful parts of the state that they need to visit.

I am asking that you keep the budget intact at \$12 million.

Sincerely,

Elaine Klevens