



February 27, 2015

Senator Beth Bye
Deputy Majority Leader
Legislative Office Building
Room 2700
Hartford, CT 06106-1591

Dear Senator Bye and Distinguished Members of the Appropriations Committee,

On behalf of our entire Board of Directors and the over 750 business members that the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce represents and serves on a daily basis, I respectfully submit the following into public record for immediate review and consideration in reference to HB 6824: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET.

The Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce is far-reaching, actively serving members from Norwich to New London, from Groton to Stonington. Our focus is to provide hands-on resources and timely business development initiatives to the locally-owned, small businesses that dominate the landscape of our region and simultaneously support the large multi-national businesses that employ thousands of residents within our geographic region. We are able to center our focus and attention on solidifying and strengthening the overall business base of our community by partnering with and leveraging the talents and expertise that is provided by the Eastern Regional Tourism District, specifically in the areas of interstate travel and tourism.

In 2014 alone, the Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce alongside countless business within our membership, partnered with the Eastern Regional Tourism District to promote over 30 signature events to our region that are critical in providing sustained economic growth throughout the year across our region. For example, the Mystic Aquarium, Mystic Seaport, Olde Mistick Village, Downtown Mystic Merchants Association, Groton Business Association, Waterford Hotel Group, Mohegan Sun Casino, Foxwoods Resort Casino, and the New London Day are just a few organizations that work in conjunction with our Chamber and the subsequent relationship and partnership that we have with the Eastern Regional Tourism

District to ensure that the aforementioned calendar of tourism-based events within our region provides sustained value to our businesses and residents, while simultaneously ensuring that travelers and vacationers see and utilize Greater Mystic as a top and preferred destination point versus a pass-through from Boston to New York.

As a result, the proposed elimination of the Eastern Regional Tourism District would have a profound and immediate negative impact to the Greater Mystic community at-large. In short, the cultivation of small business development and fostered growth would be forced to receive less attention by our Chamber, as our near-term focus would be centered on/around the creation of a new independent tourism arm to absorb the vacuum created by the elimination of the Eastern Regional Tourism District. The repercussions here are palpable and not to be downplayed or diminished.

Greater Mystic, Mystic Country if you will, is a collaborative space within the business sector and none more so than within the realm of travel and tourism. This collaboration starts and ends with the glue that is the Eastern Regional Tourism District. The elimination of this organization may help to solve the immediate budgetary needs that this Committee faces in 2015. However, the overall financial impact to Southeastern Connecticut and especially to that of Greater Mystic will be far-reaching and immediate, having a severe impact on small business in our represented communities that will be felt for years to come.

We strongly encourage this Committee to re-examine the proposed elimination of the Eastern Regional Tourism District and ask the Committee to subsequently re-established support for this critical organization within our community at-large.

Respectfully,



Stephen J. Clemente
Chairman, Greater Mystic Chamber of Commerce

cc: State of Connecticut, Appropriations Committee