

February 27, 2015

Dear members of the Appropriations Committee:

**Greetings from East Haddam, Connecticut, a small, rural town alive with history, art and natural beauty.** We are the proud home of iconic tourism attractions such as Gillette Castle State Park and the Goodspeed Opera House, and hidden gems such as Ray of Light Farm, animal rescue and equestrian center, and I-Park artist-in-residence program and 450 acre nature preserve.

My name is Deb Mathiasen, a volunteer member of the East Haddam Economic Development Commission (15 yrs.) and East Haddam's representative to the Central Regional Tourism District Board of Directors since its inception, nearly twelve years ago.

**I am writing today to encourage you to REINSTATE FUNDING (\$500,000/yr. each) FOR THE THREE REGIONAL TOURISM DISTRICTS in the proposed 2016/2017 Biennial Budget.** Tourism is a key component of East Haddam's economic base, with over 50 small businesses providing goods and services to those visiting our cultural, historic, and environmental assets. *(See Business Directory & Visitor Guide on easthaddam.org)*

Each level of the culture and tourism infrastructure – State, Regional, and Local – has a role in attracting, educating, and serving those who visit (and spend money) in East Haddam. Please continue the investment in these Regional Offices that have proven they can “do a lot with a little”. **The free listings in the Greater Hartford/River Valley Visitor's Guide, special “trails” brochures, centerofct.com website, travel videos, and social media activity help to put East Haddam businesses on the map.** The Regional Tourism Districts provide the essential link from getting visitors into the State to getting visitors in the door.

The success of East Haddam tourism economic development needs the continued support of these regional tourism professionals and the services that they provide.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

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**Easthaddam.org Visitor Guide**

*12+ Cultural Attractions (History & Arts)*

*25+ Recreational Attractions (8 State Parks/14 Land Trust Preserves/*

*2 Nature Conservancy Properties/5 Boat/Kayak Launches)*