

VISIT NEW HAVEN

**Testimony of Barbara Malmberg, Director of Marketing for Visit New Haven in
support of the Regional Tourism District Funding and CT Tourism Marketing
Funding to the Appropriations Committee
March 2, 2015**

Dear Senator Bye and Representative Walker and members of the Appropriations Committee:

I am writing in strong support of fully funding of state tourism marketing and the regional tourism districts.

The mission of the Visit New Haven (VNH) is to promote the Greater New Haven region as an ideal leisure and business destination to the regional, national, and international markets in order to favorably impact the regional economy. Specifically, the goal of VNH is to generate overnight business at hotels, motels or bed & breakfasts in the region, which in turn will increase business at restaurants, attractions, shops and other retail establishments, thereby enhancing the economic fabric of the region. VNH focuses on attracting leisure travelers, motorcoach groups, meetings and conferences and major sporting events and tournaments.

As I am sure you know, the hotel occupancy tax is 15%, the highest state hotel tax in the nation. In 2012, the tax increased from 12% to 15%. That same year state \$15 million dollars was allocated at the state level with approximately \$1.5 million to the three tourism districts. In 2014, the tourism industry generated \$105 million in tax revenue and is the only sector where employment has returned to its pre-recession levels.

Our state is competing with 49 other states for domestic travel dollars. We must continue to market Connecticut as both a great destination and a desirable place to do business. As many restaurants and shops are small businesses, their contribution is core to differentiating our state from the competition.

On behalf of the Visit New Haven and our constituents, I thank you for your time and urge your approval of full funding of the tourism marketing at both the state and district level.

Sincerely,



Barbara Malmberg
Director of Marketing