

Matthew Price Testimony to the Pennsylvania Senate and House Joint Committee Hearing on Tourism Funding

March 16, 2016

9:00 AM

Good morning Chairwoman Ward, Chairman Farnese and Chairman Hickernell and members of the committees. Thank you for convening this hearing and for inviting me to testify. I am Matt Price and I am the Executive Director of the Huntingdon County Visitors Bureau and the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Pennsylvania Association of Travel and Tourism. PATT's mission is to unify and lead Pennsylvania's travel and tourism industry, presenting one voice on public policy while serving the needs of its diverse investors.

On behalf of the nearly half-million Pennsylvanians whose jobs rely on visitor spending, we are here before you this morning to demonstrate the need for our Commonwealth to invest in marketing to attract tourism. For the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania this is an investment – an investment which can expect a direct return in state government tax revenue of \$2.79 for every dollar spent over the next four years. In other words, every time the state spends a dollar attracting a visitor to Pennsylvania. That visitor, by spending money on transportation, lodging, shopping, entertainment and dining, paying the state sales and use taxes on those purchases and supporting the businesses and employees who also pay state taxes - the state gets that original dollar back and another \$1.79 to spend on education, social services, transportation and other programs that the citizens of this Commonwealth so desperately need.

Over the past eight years I have sat in the gallery during hearings of both of the committees convened today, and I have seen my colleagues, secretaries and deputy secretaries delivering testimony stressing the investment value of destination marketing. I have also consistently heard from the distinguished members of the committees two questions. Those questions are “What is the ideal amount the Commonwealth should be spending on marketing to attract tourism?” and “What would you do with the money?” You just heard from Adam Sacks the answer to the first question - \$35 Million is that ideal amount that will maximize the return on investment. The second question will be answered in a few moments by Deputy Secretary LePore.

Last week, Pennsylvania launched a new brand. The brand is the result of a public-private collaboration that has spanned the administrations of three governors. This brand is backed by volumes of primary and secondary research, years of work by representatives from the tourism industry and government, and most importantly it is consumer tested with overwhelmingly positive results. With the new brand, the Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership also completed a comprehensive marketing plan, both to launch the brand and to begin to reestablish Pennsylvania among the top 5 most visited states in the country.

I was recently asked the question by a member of this committee, “Why haven't I been hearing about this need to fund tourism from my constituents and my local DMO?” After some thought, I answered by saying that up until this moment, I as a DMO director, really haven't trusted that a plan was in place to spend the money effectively. Through the work of the Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership and the brand and marketing plan that they have established with the DCED secretary as co-chair, I now have the faith to call my colleagues across the Commonwealth and my members in Huntingdon County to action. So I assure you, you will hear from us!

Thank you again for allowing me to testify today. It is now my pleasure to introduce Carrie Fischer LePore, Deputy Secretary of Tourism, Marketing and Film for the Department of Community and Economic Development and the public sector co-chair of the Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership.