



Honorable Members of the Massachusetts House of Representatives SouthCoast Area Delegation
24 Beacon St.
Boston, MA 02133

On behalf of the New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce, we write today to strongly urge your veto override of tourism-related items in the Fiscal Year 2017 state budget.

The Governor's vetoes would have a devastating impact on tourism work here in Massachusetts. **His drastic cuts would lead to a 50%+ cut in funding for Regional Tourism Councils (RTCs) and a 30% cut in tourism outreach and marketing overall.** Just recently the state of New York announced a major new investment in marketing and promotion of tourism in its state.

SECTION 39 - TOURISM TRUST FUND

The Governor's suggested veto would cut funding by 30% for tourism and 50+% for RTCs.

SECTION 39 sets in place a minimum predictable baseline funding for key tourism and promotion agencies. In 2014 the Legislature created the Tourism Trust Fund to dedicate a certain percentage of revenue derived from the room occupancy tax to continued tourism outreach efforts, with funds targeted for the Massachusetts Office of Travel & Tourism (MOTT) and the Regional Tourism Councils (RTCs). The 2014 formula has not been implemented. SECTION 39 reconfigures the formula. Investment in MOTT and the RTCs will enable the state to continue to maintain and grow tourism and regional visitation. SECTION 39 provides MOTT and the RTCs with baseline funding and the predictability needed to execute year-round marketing and promotion campaigns.

SECTION 39 of the FY17 State Budget creates a baseline funding formula of \$10 million, with \$6 million funding the RTCs and \$4 million funding MOTT. The Governor's veto cuts the baseline funding to \$7 million and changes the formula, gutting funding for RTCs.

Please override SECTION 39.

VISITOR INFORMATION CENTERS (VICs) – ITEM 7008-0900

The Governor vetoes earmark language to fund Visitor Information Centers (VICs). VICs are located at strategic locations across Massachusetts. They provide visitors with a central location/portal for things to do, places to visit, attractions, and mapping.

The Centers are located at key entry points to the state and impactful high tourist locations. Each VIC offers visitors a cross-section of things to do and see across the state in regions east, west, north and south.

VICs are our state's welcome centers and in many cases the first stop and impression one has when visiting our state by car. They are an integral part of our tourism outreach and marketing --- when properly promoted to, visitors will seek attractions and sites throughout multiple regions.

VICs also play a public safety role. Often times they serve as a rest stop for those driving and traveling long distances.

Tourism is a major economic driver – we should not be cutting investment in it

Tourism has a tremendous economic impact in Massachusetts --- creating jobs and generating revenue. We have compelling destinations with attractions, dining and shopping that attract those from across the country and the world.

Tourism creates 132,000 jobs and generates \$1.2 billion in tax revenue in the State of Massachusetts. **In Bristol County Tourism creates 3,392 jobs, generates \$26 million in State tax revenue and \$10 million in Local tax revenue.** In order to maximize and exceed the impact the industry can have on our state, those promoting and marketing it must receive the dollars to do it in a timely and predictable way. Promotion and marketing campaigns must be designed and implemented and we must be able to maximize key seasonal periods throughout the calendar year.

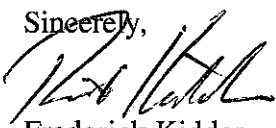
We now have direct flights to Logan Airport from 55 international destinations and we attract 23.5 million annual visitors to the Commonwealth spending \$19.5 billion. In order to continue to keep this economic engine moving, to maintain and grow these jobs and increase revenue to communities and the state we must continue to invest in tourism.

- We are losing market share. Massachusetts has lost tourism market share for domestic and international visitors. We must curb this trend.
- We invest less than our competitors. Our investment in tourism marketing trails other states. Potential visitors only have limited discretionary dollars to spend, vacationers will choose other destinations – we can't let this happen.
- A unique public/private partnership. RTCs are funded through a unique public/private partnership – in order to receive state funding RTCs must match their allocation dollar for dollar with private monies.
- Return on Investment. Every dollar spent attracting visitors to the state generates increased revenue for the state and communities.

Tourism is a significant economic driver of our state's economy and like other important industries, it is important that we invest in them to ensure continued growth.

Please override SECTION 39 and item 7008-0009.

Sincerely,



Frederick Kidder

New Bedford Area Chamber of Commerce