

Pennsylvania Tourism & Lodging Association

Testimony for the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee

By Jim Purdum, Chairman, PTLA

and past Chairman of the Central PA Convention & Visitors Bureau

Good morning Chairman Stern and members of the House Tourism Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the creation of the Pennsylvania Tourism Commission. I'm Jim Purdum, Chairman of the Pennsylvania Tourism and Lodging Association. PTLA represents lodging and tourism interests throughout the Commonwealth with more than 600 members. Our membership represents a cross section of tourism interests and includes all forms of lodging properties, lodging management companies, a wide variety of attractions, tourist promotion agencies, vendors to our industry and hospitality schools.

Our Association also recognizes the challenge of balancing a state budget with so many competing interests in a very challenging economy. With that said, Pennsylvania's extraordinary hospitality & tourism assets are well positioned to be part of the solution to these challenges and creating the proposed Pennsylvania Tourism Commission is an important step in generating jobs and growth for Pennsylvania's 2nd largest industry.

PTLA supports the creation of the Pennsylvania Tourism Commission as an agency that has the potential to foster innovation, creativity and accountability in a more long term, stable and strategic environment. This proposed public-private partnership would provide an excellent framework to market and promote the commonwealth as the top tier tourism destination it is and would appear to be a very sound investment in the future of Pennsylvania's economic vitality.

With that said, our membership would encourage a very thoughtful approach to funding such an agency. The proposal currently leaves some elements of funding open to future exploration. The lodging industry, in addition to generating \$150 million per year via the 6% state-wide occupancy tax, also provides another \$120 million in room tax revenue in direct support of local and regional tourism. These funds have been extremely beneficial to regional tourism marketing efforts despite the concern that some of those revenues have been and continue to be diverted to uses that may not conform to the intent of the enabling legislation. To that end, we would ask that the lodging industry not be targeted as the sole source of funding for this or other tourism marketing initiatives that benefit the broader travel and tourism industry within the Commonwealth. We would also ask that a thoughtful review of existing revenue streams are included in this process to verify that all our tourism investments are doing what they were intended to do and are being managed by the appropriate tourism promotion

agencies to grow tourism in their respective local and regional markets. When tourism works, and it does, we all benefit. The Pennsylvania Tourism Commission is a good place to start with all its stakeholders contributing to the growth of the tourism industry and the jobs it can and will create when all who benefit are vested in its future.

Thank you.