

Testimony for the House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee

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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. My name is Dan Johnson. I have been in the hospitality industry since 1993 and am the General Manager of the largest hotel in York County. I am a board member of the Pennsylvania Tourism & Lodging Association as well as the York County Convention and Visitors Bureau.

As you know, Tourism is Pennsylvania's 2<sup>nd</sup> largest industry. It generates hundreds of millions of dollars for the state and employs over 400,000 people or roughly 7 percent of our work force.

As an industry, we have private sector strengths and relationships with the public sector. The building and operation of facilities, providing entertainment and recreation, operating tours and much more - are things that are firmly rooted in the private sector. Public sector relationships include building and maintaining our infrastructure and promotion of the state as a whole. If we build it – they will come. From creating jobs,

paying wages, the residual benefits of construction and development and ongoing supplier relationships to keep these facilities going - all are an important component to our state's economy. Therefore, it is clear that a natural harmony of interests exist between industry and government.

Even in the best of times, however, government has the challenge of balancing spending while doing the most good. When the economy sours - needed – but often very painful cuts in spending have to be made. This is where the proposed Commission will be a benefit to the state, the taxpayer and the tourism industry.

As a public – private partnership, the Commission will be able to share the resources, risk and rewards between government and private industry. It will create better efficiencies, provide access to private sector investment (reducing reliance on tax dollar infusions) and include human capital – the key industry experts and stakeholders who can ensure the success of the Commission and its efforts.

Is a public private partnership the way to go? This past weekend, the Maryland House of Delegates voted in favor of looking into private-public partnerships with respect to road and public building projects. I believe it can work with Tourism promotion as well.

An action like this relieves the burden on the tax payer through shared funding versus complete tax based funding. It solidifies the relationship with industry instead of complete state direction and control (which should make advocates for smaller government happy), it includes the involvement of industry experts to help ensure success, and the state will have an opportunity to focus on other areas as it shifts from complete oversight, decision, fault or blame - into a partnership with the states 2<sup>nd</sup> largest industry.

We all share the resulting benefits of tourism in our communities and in our economy. We can build on private sector successes to get things done here in Pennsylvania, reduce the reliance on government, reduce the reliance on tax dollars and involve the experts who know how to bring tourists into the state. I support the creation of the Commission as a way to build on our individual successes and as a way to advance the future of Pennsylvania tourism in a positive way.

Thank you.

