



Travel Matters

Testimony of Jack Ferguson

President & CEO, Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau

Thank you, Chairwoman, for the opportunity to address the Senate Committee on Community, Economic and Recreational Development. I'm Jack Ferguson, President and CEO for the Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau and here to tell you why travel matters to the people of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Each day, Philadelphia welcomes visitors from around the globe, whether they are attending a convention or meeting, visiting historic or cultural sites with family and friends, heading here for business, or coming to attend one of our top universities for the first time. But, they didn't get here by accident. They got here because of organizations like ours.

Our organization markets Philadelphia and Pennsylvania around the globe. We do this in partnership with the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, City of Philadelphia, Philadelphia International Airport, and others. As a result of our efforts, Philadelphia has moved up from the 21st most visited city in the U.S. from overseas in 2002 to now the 14th – in just over 10 years.

The approved merger of US Airways and American Airlines by the U.S. Justice Department last week creates the world's largest airline and opens the potential flood gates for business and leisure travel to greater Philadelphia. This matters because it represents a significant economic opportunity to advance global convention and international tourism business for our entire region. If we take full advantage of the situation through strategic investments, we can capture the growing international travel market, which is expected to increase 23% by 2016.

The newly formed American Airlines will bring our region access from 336 destinations in 56 countries – meaning more people will have a way to access our great City and region and support the future economic vitality of the travel industry. The accessibility of our region is the top driving factor for conventions considering Philadelphia, as well as for international travelers when deciding on a destination to visit for conventions, a group tour, to do business or just for fun. The easier it is to get to a destination, the more likely someone will choose to go there and return. That's why our team worked diligently at the City, State and Federal levels to see this merger through.

As the sales and marketing arm for the Pennsylvania Convention Center, travel matters because conventions bring people from around the world to Philadelphia and the Commonwealth for the first time and that can have a huge spillover effect - \$5 Billion worth in future business in the expanded convention center to be exact. In Philadelphia, convention attendees fill more than 40% of hotel rooms each year with 30% of all convention attendees now coming from outside the U.S. And when they do visit, they spend their dollars here, look at sending their kids to our colleges and universities, and may even look at Pennsylvania as a place to start or grow a business.

Travel matters because it builds a city or state's brand image and shapes its narrative. It's critical that people around the world hear our stories, see our pictures, and that we be bold and loud in sharing these assets with the world.

But travel matters most because of the jobs it creates. It is an economic engine and fuels our economy with NEW money coming in from outside the state each year. Philadelphia's travel industry employs more than 108,000 people in the region (56,000 in the City); people who live in every neighborhood and represent every socio-economic background.

You may have noticed my PHL pin – the new mark inspired by our airport travel code and designed by the **PHLCVB** to represent Philadelphia globally. Last year we led a Global Messaging Project that led to the creation of an open source narrative and mark for Philadelphia that is now used by more than 55 partners. All of these partners are committed to serving as positive ambassadors for our city, and helping to reinforce a unified message to encourage more people to choose to visit and return to our city.

We hope the Commonwealth of PA will continue to reinvest in our tourism industry at the state level so that Pennsylvania gains a stronger presence on the world map and we can realize our full potential as a world-class destination of the future.

Thank you for your time.