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visitpittsburgh.com

TOURISM BUILDS COMMUNITY

Ms. Chairman, thank you for the opportunity to address the Senate Committee on Community, Economic and Recreational Development. My name is Jason Fulvi and I am the Executive Vice President of VisitPittsburgh. The name of this Senate Committee is a direct reflection on the true power of Tourism....Tourism, in fact, BUILDS Community.

You have heard from my distinguished colleagues about the power of tourism in their respective destinations and how that translates to the Commonwealth. Let me tell you what tourism means to the Pittsburgh region and how it too is a model for the rest of the State. What tourism means to taxpayers and businesses located here is...other people's money! The money that visitors leave in this region enters the channel of trade and has marketing and PR value. In the Pittsburgh region the influx of other people's money equates to \$5.3 Billion in economic impact.

Bringing the outside in has tremendous advantages in terms of taxes and employment. Let's do the math. 11 million overnight visitors come to our region each year. That equals about 30,000 people each day staying in hotels or with friends and family. Since these visitors eat, sleep, purchase goods and consume energy here they have an impact EVERY DAY on business and business suppliers, which directly translates to employment and economic development. In fact tourism supports 38,000 jobs and \$1.3 Billion in wages and benefits in Allegheny County alone.

Visitors pay sales taxes, liquor taxes and hotel taxes. These taxes go to schools, transportation and community services, and they support our regional assets, like our parks, stadiums and cultural attractions. In fact, state and local tax revenue generated by visitors to Allegheny County is estimated at \$320 million. Thanks to the taxes visitors pay each household in Allegheny County saves \$617 annually. That means, that if it were not for tourists, every household in Allegheny County, on average, would have to pay an additional \$617 in taxes in order to receive the same government services that they do now. Those services are what help to build and maintain the communities that we all live and work in.

As you know, the increase in tourism has sparked improvements to our attractions, new restaurants and hotel development in our region. Our residents and business community also benefit from these new developments. They frequent the new restaurants, retail shops and attractions, and thus, our community grows. When you have a strong community, people want to live, work and do business there. Which makes it easier for corporations and institutions to attract talented employees and students from outside the region.

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Those familiar with Pittsburgh would agree that our local residents' perception of the area has gotten exponentially more positive in the last ten years or so. I would argue to you that building the David L. Lawrence Convention Center ten years ago is more than just brick and mortar. Just the idea of the world's largest green convention center being introduced in the Steel City was the beginning of a psychological renaissance in our community. I would also submit to you that much of our newfound pride may be tied to some significant events which have been held in the city over the past short while.

What a game-changing statement was made back in 2005 when ESPN announced that the Bassmasters Classic tournament- the Superbowl of Fishing -- would take place on the edge of Point State Park. Residents can say that hosting that event is proof positive that we are a clean, green city.

What city in the United States, other than DC, can say that they've been chosen to host the G-20 summit? The underlying message is that Pittsburgh is good enough for the leaders of the free world so it is by extension, certainly good enough for you.

Just last year we hosted the International One Young World Summit, beating out Johannesburg South Africa for the opportunity to impress hundreds of the world's next young leaders. Pittsburgh proved its community pride through acts of extreme volunteerism. Members of the community hosted 50 home dinners for these young people, and other volunteers were stationed at every major hotel and at the convention center. Hundreds of people who have been trained through our PittsburghHosts ambassador program are called upon when major conventions or sports events come to town.

The community supports tourism and tourism supports the community. Working to move our destination forward is a communal effort!

Over the years we've been able to garner accolades from media around the world. These journalists first visited our region before they wrote, and delivered rankings as the most livable city and one of the top 20 places in the world to visit. They are a part of Pittsburgh's psychological renaissance.

So, you see, tourism does build our community, and it does it by growing businesses. And it moves the entire community forward as a destination.

This same formula needs to live within our great state as well. Your support of tourism within the commonwealth will continue to drive economic growth, will continue to improve our state's infrastructure, will continue to drive jobs, development, and yes community spirit. As my good friend Mara Gast, Executive Director of the Irving CVB so eloquently stated: Build a place where people want to VISIT and you build a place where people want to LIVE; build a place where people want to LIVE and you build a place where people want to WORK; build a place where people want to WORK and you build a place where people want to DO BUSINESS. So you see tourism does, in fact, build community.