



# POCONO MOUNTAINS<sup>SM</sup>

## VISITORS BUREAU

Testimony of Christopher S. Barrett  
President/CEO  
Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau

### Tourism Hearing – CERD Committee – June 13, 2017

Good morning Mr. Chairman, Ranking Member and Senators. Thank you so much for this opportunity to speak with you concerning the tourism industry in the Pocono Mountains and its impact upon the collective economies of the counties of Carbon, Monroe, Wayne and Pike. Your interest and consideration of the issues that we face are greatly appreciated.

We know that you are dealing daily with issues of great gravity. Areas of safety and security, human services and education are so important. Those voices need to be heard and their concerns and needs evaluated. We understand this and respect it. It must place all of you in difficult positions to say the least.

My objective today is to outline for all of you some of the economic facts as they relate to tourism in the Pocono Mountains. I would ask for your indulgence just for a few minutes as I list them:

- Since 2012 the Pocono Mountains has seen an increase in the number of visitors to the region of 6%, from 25 million visitors during 2012 to 26.6 million guests during 2016. \*
- Some overall statistics for the Pocono Mountains from 2016\*
  - Overnight trips in market generated \$1.5 billion in spending
  - The average number of nights stayed was 2.3
  - The average travel party size was 3.5
- Travelers spent over \$3.2 billion in the Pocono Mountains region during 2015 – the fourth highest of the state’s 11 tourism regions. The region’s 8.2% spending growth rate from 2014 was the strongest rate of increase among the regions and the third highest amount of increase in dollar terms on record. ^
- The Pocono Mountains region had the highest proportion of traveler dollars spent on shopping and the fourth highest on lodging among the state’s 11 tourism regions during 2015. ^
- For every \$1 spent on tourism marketing it’s proven that we will receive over \$3 in return.
- Our region’s share of travel supported labor income topped 50% in 2015 — increasing to 53.2%, while the employment share grew to 36.3% of the region’s economy. ^

- As in prior years, the Pocono Mountains region continued to have, by far, the highest proportion of labor income and employment supported by travel of the state's 11 tourism regions.
- The source of growth for the Pocono Mountains can be attributed to its member properties and attractions marketing efforts combined with the PMBV.
- The funding for the Pocono Mountains Visitor Bureau stems mainly from a 3% hotel tax. The marketing budgets from our properties and attractions have continued to grow because of this investment and our member's vision to expand the market themselves as well as the destination.
- The PMVB has spent regularly close to 75% of its total budget on marketing efforts. This funding has been spent in the New York and Philadelphia markets along with other markets throughout the US.

I would point to one statement that was outlined by me previously. For every \$1 spent on tourism marketing the destination as well as the State can realize a strong return...a return of \$3. In other terms this is a 300% return on dollars invested. We would be hard pressed to identify such a strong return on resources invested. Would we not?

I would be remiss if I didn't mention the yeoman's work being done by the State Tourism Office directed by Secretary Lepore and Executive Director Michael Chapaloney. They have worked miracles with very few resources. We support them both as well as the office's efforts 100%.

Without adequate funding for our State tourism effort, the Pennsylvania's overall branding position and place as a top ranked travel destination will continue to erode over time. The State of New York is investing millions in tourism marketing for example and is attracting venues such as Legoland to locate within its borders as they are signaling that they are tourism friendly. This is a whole other topic...the economic development spin off. This will be greatly effected as well.

Again, we thank you all your time and effort. On behalf of the Pocono Mountains, we would ask that funding for the Office of State Tourism be increased to \$10,000,000 as proposed in the Governor's budget.

I would be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

\* Longwoods International research study developed for the Pocono Mountains 2016

^The Economic Impact of Travel in Pennsylvania for 2015 by Tourism Economics