

Economic Alliance
SNOHOMISH COUNTY



North Puget Sound
at Everett

WASHINGTON STATE UNIVERSITY



June 13, 2017

The Honorable Timm Ormsby
House Appropriations Chair
315 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Kristine Lytton
House Finance Chair
368 John L. O'Brien Bldg.
Olympia, WA 98504.

RE: Support Tourism Marketing Program

Dear Representative Ormsby and Representative Lytton:

First we would like to thank you both for your tireless efforts in working towards an agreement for our state's operating budget. We appreciate the difficulty in this task and applaud your efforts in doing so. In these final weeks of negotiation, please support funding of a statewide tourism marketing program in the 2017-19 budget and put your full support behind passage of the implementing legislation (SSB5251/SHB1123). We in Snohomish County recognize the state's priorities for funding education and important social services, however the opportunities for a return on the state's investment through a tourism marketing program will help grow our state and local economies.

The small investment by the state will be matched 2-for1 by the tourism industry and provide almost immediate returns on the investment to state coffers. The important tax and spending revenue generated by tourism will make a difference for years to come.

Washington is the only state in the nation without a statewide tourism marketing program. British Columbia and neighboring states are tough competitors for northwest tourism and we need to make sure Washington State has a strong voice to attract visitors. The Provincial government will contribute nearly \$53 million to Destination British Columbia over the next two years. Oregon will spend \$76 million on tourism promotion - \$17 million of that will be on global advertising. There is no coordinated statewide Washington program to bring in more national or international travelers.

Our communities do an excellent job with local lodging taxes to promote themselves but to grow tourism revenues for the state, Washington needs to have a statewide tourism marketing program that brings national and international visitors into Washington State. One of the primary goals of the legislation is to reach travelers and get them to areas of the state outside urban centers.

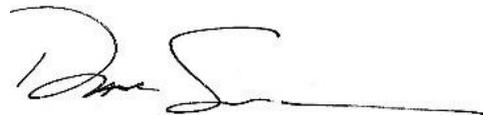
It is important for the state legislature to pass authorizing legislation as well and provide funding in the state budget for a statewide tourism marketing program. The structure of a Tourism Marketing Authority is necessary to ensure accountability and a return on the state investment. A budget allocation alone won't provide the guidance as defined by a working group of bipartisan legislators from both the House and Senate who spent several months in the 2016 interim developing the program.

Tourism is one of our best "exports" that can only be purchased and enjoyed right here at home. Tourism jobs cannot be "outsourced" and the revenue visitors bring to our communities stays there, generating local and state tax revenue. It is why we support a statewide tourism marketing program as proposed in SHB1123/SSB5251 and in the 2017-19 budget. Thank you again for all of your hard work and for considering this very important issue.

Sincerely,



Patrick Pierce
President & CEO, EASC



Dave Somers
Snohomish County Executive



Les Reardanz
CEO, Port of Everett



Shannon Affholter
Executive Director, Master Builders Association of King and Snohomish County



Emmet Heath
CEO, Community Transit



Ray Stephanson
Mayor, City of Everett



Mark Beattie, PhD
Program Coordinator, WSU North Puget Sound at
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Erin Monroe
CEO, Workforce Snohomish



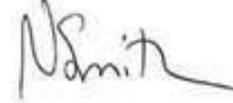
Jon Nehring
Mayor, City of Marysville



John Spencer
Mayor, City of Lake Stevens



Geoffrey Thomas
Mayor, City of Monroe



Nicola Smith
Mayor, City of Lynnwood



Tom Hamilton
Mayor, City of Snohomish



Dave Earling
Mayor of Edmonds

CC: Rep. June Robinson
Appropriations, Vice-Chair

Rep. Bruce Chandler
Appropriations, Ranking Minority Member

Rep. Terry Nealey
Finance, Ranking Minority Member

Rep. Drew MacEwen
Appropriations, Asst. Ranking Minority Member

Rep. Ed Orcutt
Finance, Asst. Ranking Minority Member