



Washington State Senate

May 10, 2017

The Honorable Senator Braun
303 John A Cherberg Building
PO Box 40420
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Statewide Tourism Marketing Program (SSB 5251)

Dear Senator Braun,

As we approach the end of the 2017 Regular Legislative Session, we encourage you and the leadership of the Senate Majority Coalition Caucus to pass SSB 5251 and ensure that full funding for a statewide tourism marketing program is included in the 2017-19 state budget. The marketing program (as established in SSB 5251) exemplifies a key legislative principle: *Creating an economic environment where jobs are plentiful and small businesses thrive.*

Thank you for your leadership in guiding the Senate budget and we are encouraged the issue was included in the Senate budget.

The mechanism established in SSB 5251 would combine industry funding with state general funds to provide a performance-based program. It specifically targets our rural and tourism-dependent communities.

A statewide tourism marketing program can only be accomplished by a Tourism Marketing Authority that focuses on bringing new visitors to our state. Localized promotion will remain the job of our creative and unique communities.

Rather than be a source of funding for a statewide tourism marketing program, these local tourism efforts must remain an integral part of a statewide marketing effort. The proceeds of local lodging taxes are committed to local tourism promotion programs as well as paying bonds for buildings such as convention centers, stadiums, arenas, and performing arts centers.

Other states with local lodging taxes and local marketing programs **also** have statewide tourism marketing programs. In Oregon, local tourism marketing organizations spent more than \$32

million, collectively in 2015, marketing their local areas. Additionally, Oregon spent about \$20 million marketing the state to out-of-state visitors.

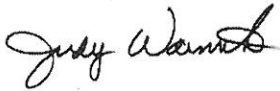
It is important to recognize what we are losing by NOT having a statewide marketing program. The US Travel Association recently described what has happened to Washington's competitiveness in the tourism marketplace:

- Travel spending growth was 13% slower than average national growth
- Travel-generated tax revenue growth was 26% slower than the national rate
- Neighboring states increased market share by raising their own marketing budgets
- Montana increased funding by 30% and traveler spending in Montana grew 70% faster than in Washington
- Travel-related tax revenue in Montana also outstripped the more populous Washington

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 and generates local and state tax revenue. The Washington Tourism Alliance believes there is a minimum of a three-to-one return to the state treasury on investment for the proposed statewide tourism marketing program.

We ask for your support of SSB 5251 and to allocate funding so we can begin to quickly return the state's investment.

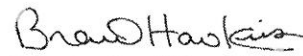
Sincerely,



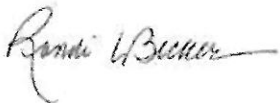
Senator Judy Warnick
13th Legislative District



Senator Dean Takko
19th Legislative District



Senator Brad Hawkins
12th Legislative District



Senator Randi Becker
2nd Legislative District



Senator Patty Kuderer
48th Legislative District



Senator Shelly Short
7th Legislative District



Senator Barbara Bailey
10th Legislative District



Senator Karen Keiser
33rd Legislative District



Senator Sharon Brown
8th Legislative District



Senator Guy Palumbo
1st Legislative District



Senator Christine Rolfes
23rd Legislative District