

As a member of the Massachusetts tourism industry, I urge you to support the proposed Senate amendment to restore the regional tourism marketing program (Item # 7007-1000). The initial budget recommendation from the Ways & Means Committee eliminated this program and the amendment ECO 231 asks for a \$6 million allocation. The amendment represents a 33 percent reduction from the FY09 budget.

Regional tourism marketing is an important extension of the Commonwealth's efforts to draw more visitors and their dollars to Massachusetts. The success of these programs has been impressive:

- Massachusetts visitors spent \$15.1 billion -- four billion more than in 2003
- Spending generated \$2.3 billion in tax receipts.
- Tourism is an income-producing arm of the government:
 - FY08 tax collections from lodging alone was \$119,137,000 state room tax
 - An additional \$96,854,000 local option room tax collections
- Tourism supports jobs - 127,800 jobs throughout the Commonwealth. Thousands more are dependent on these businesses' success.

We recognize the need to combine cost cutting with revenue enhancement in your current deliberations. At the same time, know that tourism marketing yields a strong return on investment. Regional dollars invested by the state are leveraged with our private funds and the resulting promotional programs are coordinated with the State's efforts. Therefore, the elimination of this program means a loss of \$18 million dollars in promotional programs in a very competitive environment. This will certainly result in a further decline in state revenues as early as 2010 with a real potential for long-term loss in visitation and visitor spending.

Please guard against this and support the amendment to restore Item # 7007-1000.