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March 1, 2024

Honorable Marvin Abney

Chairman and House Finance Committee

82 Smith Street

Providence RI 02903

Re: Support for House Bill 7688 and Senate Bill 2343

Dear Chairman Abney and House Finance Committee,

Charlestown Chamber of Commerce and all business listed below fully support House Bill 7688 and addressing An Act Relating to State Affairs and Government- Tourism and Development, 42-63.1-3.

In 1995, the General Assembly passed legislation to aid the RI Convention Center by redirecting 5% of statewide hotel tax revenue to the Providence Warwick Convention and Visitors Bureau (PWCVB). This was due to a shortage of hotel rooms in Providence for large conventions. Over nearly three decades, this tax has been collected statewide, including in South County as a subsidy for the PWCVB.

Since then, Providence has substantially increased its hotel room capacity as well as adding another revenue stream via the Tourism Improvement District (TIO), thus rendering the initial need obsolete. Yet, funds collected from our hotels continue to be redirected to the PWCVB. This practice of inequity has caused a tremendous strain on South County's ability to grow at the pace we believe is possible.

South County Tourism Council has expanded its off-season offerings with notable events like the International Atlantis Rising Sand Sculpting Competition and the creation of the Rhode Island Troll Trail. If these funds were properly directed, we would have the chance to collaborate and further develop off season programs and events.

It is imperative to rectify this disparity to enable us to develop and promote our region effectively. Please do not hesitate to contact me at with any inquiries.

Sincerely,

Heather Paliotta Executive Director for the Charlestown Chamber of Commerce.

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Heather Paliotta".

*Theatre by the Sea (Karen Nascembeni)