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Office of the
Town Manager

March 6, 2024

Honorable Marvin Abney,
Chairman and House Finance Committee
Rhode Island House of Representatives 82 Smith St. Providence, RI 02903
Rep-abney@rilegislature.gov

Re: Support for House Bill 7688 and Senate Bill 2343

Dear Honorable Abney,

Thank you for your anticipated support of House Bill 7688 and Senate Bill 2343, 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, and funneled to the PWCVB.

Since then, Providence has increased its hotel room capacity considerably, rendering the initial need obsolete. Meanwhile, South County has experienced its own growth with five-star accommodations like the Ocean House and Weekapaug Inn. Yet, funds collected from these venues continue to be redirected to the PWCVB. This transfer of funds has caused an enormous strain on South County.

Furthermore, the South County Tourism Council has expanded its off-season offerings with annual events like the International Atlantis Rising Sand Sculpting Competition and the Troll Trails which have potential for statewide attraction. If these funds were properly directed, we would have the chance to further develop off season programs and events.

It is so important to rectify this disparity to enable us to develop and promote our region effectively.

Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to reach out to me.

Sincerely,


Shawn M. Lacey
Town Manager