



OLD
SLATER
MILL
ASSOCIATION

March 16, 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to write this Letter of Support for the proposal of the Blackstone Valley Tourism Council to fund the continued operation of the Blackstone Valley Visitor Center in Pawtucket, Rhode Island.

As executive director of the Old Slater Mill Association, I have witnessed and experience first-hand the value of the Visitor Center to tourists who have visited the Old Slater Mill National Historic Landmark, historic downtown Pawtucket and the Blackstone Valley, and now the southern anchor of the Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park (BRVNHHP).

For several decades, the Visitor Center has served as an important part of school field trips, visits from day-trippers from around Rhode Island and nearby Massachusetts, weekend visitors from around New England, and anyone visiting from other U.S. states and international locations.

The Visitor Center as first stop provided a meaningful introduction to a visit to Old Slater Mill, with its full-sized floor map of the Blackstone River Valley providing a physical orientation; colorful and informative interpretive panels on the American Industrial Revolution, Rhode Island's textile industry, and the history of immigration to the region a valuable learning opportunity ; and, a beautifully-appointed theater in which a 10-minute film about the history of the region could be viewed.

Hundreds of thousands of visitors to Old Slater Mill began their visit at the Visitor Center, and its abbreviated operation has detracted from the experience it had been.

The Visitor Center also served to provide important information that helped to retain visitors, such as directions to local eateries, nearby supplemental attractions, and places to shop and lodge. The integrated gift shop supported the Old Slater Mill museum as well as local artisans, and the gallery provided opportunities to showcase artists and designers. The rest rooms offered a necessary convenience to travelers.

There is no doubt that the closure of the Visitor Center will not only diminish the value and experience of tourists to historic Pawtucket and Old Slater Mill, but also negatively impact local businesses and the economy.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees of the Old Slater Mill Association, I respectfully as that you prioritize this request, and I thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lori Urso