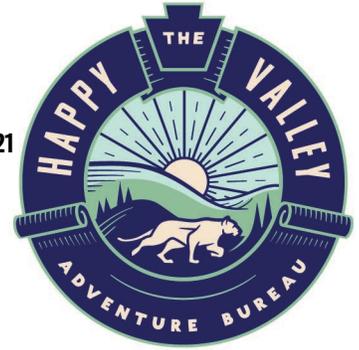


June 16, 2021



**The Honorable Jake Corman**  
**Senate President Pro Tempore**  
**236 Match Factory Place**  
**Bellefonte, PA 16823**

**Dear. Sen. Corman,**

**While the lifting of COVID-19 mitigation orders is welcome and positive news, efforts to rebuild the hospitality and tourism industries continue. Recovery will not happen overnight; a complete comeback will likely take years. As you and your colleagues work to craft the 2021-22 state budget, I respectfully urge your support of two proposals that will aid in this recovery. These proposals are priorities of The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau (HVAB) and many other Pennsylvania destination marketing organizations (DMOs).**

**DMO grant program – \$15 million**

**DMOs rely significantly on hotel tax dollars for funding, and have experienced devastating revenue losses as a result of the halt in travel during the pandemic. Ninety percent of the state's DMOs indicate that their annual budgets have decreased by 45 percent to 60 percent. The HVAB's own budget took a 75 percent hit - well exceeding the Pennsylvania average (and displaying our community's over-reliance on Penn State) - resulting in staff reductions and cuts to advertising, marketing and other initiatives. Legislation (H.B. 554) introduced in the state House by Rep. Jack Rader would create a \$15 million grant program specifically for DMOs. Individual grants would be based on the difference between hotel tax revenues in April 2020 and April 2019, the worst month of the pandemic. In Centre County, hotel occupancy in April 2019 was just 8 percent, and has yet to rebound above 50 percent. I respectfully encourage you and your colleagues to support this legislation, or the inclusion of similar language into an appropriate Senate bill.**

**Statewide tourism promotion – \$20 million**

**In 2017, the Pennsylvania Restaurant & Lodging Association commissioned a study that revealed a 3:1 return on investment for every dollar spent on tourism promotion. If Pennsylvania wants to be a player in the ultra-competitive, post-pandemic tourism promotion arena, it must match the level of investment that other states are making. \$20 million in dedicated funding is necessary for the Commonwealth to not only compete with surrounding states such as New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Maryland for visitors, but with states that aggressively and consistently promote tourism, such as New York with a \$40 million budget, and the \$16 million allocated for the "Pure Michigan" campaign that we see on our own television screens so often. Further, this increased funding commitment should be coupled with re-establishing the Statewide Tourism Partnership. This advisory group would ensure that state funds spent on tourism promotion have buy-in from the entire industry.**

**Travel and tourism is essential to our local economy and to Pennsylvania's economy. Travel supports 6.5 percent of jobs in the state, including almost 320,000 direct jobs. In addition, tourism and travel generates nearly \$4.1 billion in state and local taxes. DMOs and the state Tourism Office must have the appropriate resources to drive recovery in their individual communities and the Commonwealth through the promotion of leisure, business and sports tourism.**

**Thank you for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns.**

**Sincerely,**

**Fritz Smith**  
**President and CEO**  
**The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau**  
***The official tourism promotion agency for Centre County***

Edward Tubbs  
Chairman  
Hospitality  
Management Co.

Scott Walker  
Vice-Chairman  
State College Spikes

Tom Neely  
Treasurer  
Nittany Lion Inn

Bob Ricketts  
Past-Chairman  
Fasta & Ravioli Co.

Fritz Smith  
President & CEO  
The Happy Valley  
Adventure Bureau

Charima Young  
Penn State

Darlene Confer  
Centre County  
Grange Fair

Gary Hoover  
Bellefonte Chamber  
of Commerce

Ja Nae Wan  
Centre County  
United Way

Jennifer Corman  
Fullington Bus Co.

Joe Battista  
Pragmatic Passion

Joe Thomas  
Mountain View  
Country Club

Mark Higgins  
Centre County  
Commissioner

Stefan Cherinka  
Toftrees Golf Resort

Tim Bowser  
Elk Creek Cafe

Tom Fountaine  
State College  
Borough Manager

Vern Squier  
CBICC