

**Testimony for the
House Tourism and Recreational Development Committee and the Senate Community,
Economic and Recreational Development Committee
Joint Public Meeting
March 16, 2016**

Good morning Chairwoman Ward, Chairman Farnese, Chairman Hickernell, and Members of both Committees.

I'm Carrie Fisher Lepore, Deputy Secretary for Marketing, Tourism, and Film at the Pennsylvania Department of Community and Economic Development. I truly value the opportunity to update you on the incredible success the Pennsylvania Tourism Office and its partners have achieved since I spoke to you last year, especially around developing a strong brand for Pennsylvania and reinvigorating the Governor's Tourism Partnership.

I'm very proud of how we position and promote the state with aggressive media relations, social media, marquee event promotion and an innovative online and publication strategy to attract travelers.

I'd like to take just a few moments to walk you through our multi-faceted approach to marketing Pennsylvania.

Pennsylvania has an incredible travel story to share with regional, national and international media. In 2015 alone, our team interacted with 250 journalists to obtain more than 200 feature travel placements reaching over 1.4 billion readers. Media events in Washington, D.C., New York City, and other major media marketplaces helped keep Pennsylvania on the front page.

The Tourism Office is in the process of redesigning visitPA.com to ensure it serves as a dynamic reflection of our 11 tourism regions that inspires 2-3 million visitors to the website each year. VisitPA.com content is also shared with the nearly 200,000 people who receive our monthly e-newsletter, which includes editorial suggestions from our partners across the state.

The Tourism Office continues to view social media as an extremely cost-effective method to promote the "Pennsylvania brand," as well as specific destinations, events and attractions throughout the commonwealth. Each day we reach more than 300,000 travelers across Twitter, Facebook, Instagram (a newer channel), Pinterest and YouTube. We have grown our community by 15-20% in the past year and increased engagement by more than 20%.

We also take a strategic approach to leveraging international events to shine a spotlight on Pennsylvania.

- We created various visuals and hashtags to lead the virtual cheer for RedLand and their thrilling run in the Little League World Series in August.

- We were heavily involved in promoting Pope Francis's September visit to Philadelphia. To extend this story from a statewide perspective and inspire travel year-round, we created new road trips on Pennsylvania's unique religious history as home to more first churches than any other state in the country. Examples include the oldest German Reformed Church in America, the first Church of the Brethren, the oldest Mennonite Church, and the first Methodist Church.
- In February we celebrated the 130th anniversary of Groundhog Day with incredible buzz as Punxsutawney Phil predicted an early spring. New to this year's celebration, we used Periscope to live stream the event, worked with Snapchat, and shared pictures on Instagram. Our Facebook meme reached more than one million people organically and a single tweet was retweeted more than 2,500 times.

We have worked hard to re-establish relationships and prioritize collaboration with other state agencies like the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), PennDOT, the Fish & Boat Commission, the Game Commission and the Department of Agriculture, especially around the 100th anniversary of the Farm Show.

In fact, we recently partnered with the Pennsylvania Bed and Breakfast Association to create a Cabin Fever promotion and Facebook contest that led to more than 1,400 entries. This is just one example of a partnership where everyone benefits to generate heads in beds.

All of these key strategies have helped us create a solid foundation for our new branding efforts.

As many of you know, the Tourism Office has been working closely with the PTP to create a dynamic and inspirational brand campaign that captures the strengths of Pennsylvania's tourism product – our brand essence – that will motivate travel consumers, energize statewide stakeholders, and support and grow the industry at every level.

This brand was the result of a collaborative process that included an unprecedented amount of industry input, consumer research and market testing.

This partnership represented a new approach, because for the first time it facilitated collaboration between a broad range of private sector tourism industry leaders and the government agencies that help support and advance the state's tourism product.

As a result, we had a wealth of important perspectives and valuable resources at the table, and lots of big ideas that were focused on developing a consistent effective branding and marketing platform on behalf of Pennsylvania tourism. We had people who have spent their careers in destination and tourism marketing and business leaders who've achieved great success creating exciting destinations and travel experiences, as well as those who do the important work of keeping our state parks, historic landmarks, and other prized tourism assets the best in the nation.

It was a tremendous team effort, unified by our commitment to grounding our work in thoughtful, thorough research to ensure that we would create a brand and marketing platform that will produce results.

We all believe that branding has never been more important for Pennsylvania.

A strong brand campaign will allow us to better compete in a global industry that is more competitive than ever, where promotion is increasingly critical to driving visitation and staying top of mind.

So on behalf of the Pennsylvania Tourism Office and the Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership, I am proud to share with you Pennsylvania's new logo and tagline.

Our new brand and tagline is a bold declaration to travelers: pursue your happiness in Pennsylvania! This captures the spirit of PA, referencing the famous call to "Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness" that began with the Declaration of Independence in Philadelphia in 1776. This language is in the fabric of our founding and a brand position we feel we can authentically own. It reflects what we have always been, who we are and who we will be for years to come. Our new brand also says that in Pennsylvania, a vacation or getaway is an active, self-styled adventure – a pursuit.

Happiness is our keystone, and Pennsylvania travel is an opportunity to pursue whatever it is that makes you happy and feel free and fulfilled.

This brand umbrella also allows us to better tout our strengths - Pennsylvania offers the nation's best collection of the outdoor, city and historical destinations today's travelers seek. No other state can rival the PA travel product across these three combined asset categories. To help reveal the new brand and tagline, we've prepared a new video that highlights our approach to communicating Pennsylvania's core promise to prospective visitors - that they can build their own personal adventure from every corner of our beautiful state.

[Share brand essence video]

Pennsylvania's new logo and tagline are just the beginning, with a new brand declaration that captures the essence of the Happy Traveler available at www.visitpa.com/happiness

We're asking followers to share photos of what makes them happy about travel in PA using the hashtag #PATravelHappy on social media.

The Tourism Office will roll out more marketing initiatives in 2016 like a Happy Traveler guide featuring each of PA's unique tourism regions, and modest advertising efforts are planned through 2017.

I cannot thank the Pennsylvania Tourism Partnership (PTP) enough for their efforts as we evolve their brand work under the umbrella of the new Governor's Tourism Partnership (GTP). I believe the GTP is the natural evolution of the PTP, as they have the same objectives and

hopefully, many of the same members. Both represent a public-private partnership and ensure the private sector has a voice in shaping the future marketing promotion of the commonwealth.

As you all know, Act 189 of 2002 created the Pennsylvania Travel and Tourism Partnership and established the composition and governance of the body. In 2008, Act 50 changed the name to the Governor's Tourism Partnership, but the composition and governance remained the same. The GTP is comprised of 35 diverse members, with the majority of the members from the private sector and industry association organizations. The Secretary of the Department of Community and Economic Development serves as the chair of the organization and plans to appoint a private sector vice-chair.

We're working closely with the PTP Steering Committee to identify existing members who are interested in being appointed by the Governor to continue their work on the GTP, to advance the incredible brand work the PTP started.

All of us here today agree that this is a watershed moment for the tourism industry.

Inaction is not an option. The industry is at a critical moment where plans must be made and implemented, even as budgets are tighter. The new iteration of the GTP will ensure the industry makes the right investments to keep Pennsylvania top of mind for travelers.

As you heard, the results of the Pennsylvania Restaurant and Lodging Association study quantify for the first time what we have always known: tourism is an investment that will pay significant dividends for Pennsylvania when funded appropriately and consistently.

I use the word **investment** purposefully because I believe it is time for us to reinvest in this vital industry. As was just shared, every dollar invested in tourism promotion would yield \$3.43 in tax revenue for the Commonwealth.

I passionately support tourism promotion and agree we need a robust budget to compete in a global tourist economy.

I agree we need to help promote and tell the story of Pennsylvania and that requires a consistent investment of marketing dollars. The Tourism Office believes these marketing dollars are best used promoting and strengthening the state brand, something we have successfully continued to do regardless of funding levels.

We're ready to take this plan – and the Pennsylvania brand – to the next level.

As I hope you can tell, I am excited about the potential of tourism in Pennsylvania for 2016 and many years to come.

Today, I represent the passion and hard work of so many partners across the state. Our partners continually ask me for three things: a voice in Harrisburg, dedicated tourism funding and consistency in branding efforts.

I look forward to the continued collaboration, partnership and investment with my colleagues at this table and with each of you to follow through on these aspirations and help re-build Pennsylvania's reputation as an unrivaled destination.

I'd be happy to answer any questions.

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