



April 9th, 2018

Dear Representative,

The Pocono Mountain Visitors Bureau (PMVB) is a private, non-profit destination marketing organization located in northeast Pennsylvania and covers Carbon, Monroe, Pike and Wayne counties.

On behalf of the Pocono Mountain Visitors Bureau, we would like to submit our support for Representative Doyle Heffley's [HB 1810](#). The bill requires online home-sharing and short-term rental companies, such as AirBnB and HomeAway, doing business in Pennsylvania to register with the state and share information with taxing authorities. This will help the state enforce hotel tax collection laws, further warranting both fair competition across the hospitality industry and accurate hotel tax revenue for the state and counties. It does not create a new tax.

As online home-sharing businesses become more prevalent, it's vital for Pennsylvania to protect traditional hotels, resorts, and bed and breakfasts from unfair competition. Today, any business (hotel, bed and breakfast, home-sharing hosts, etc.) that provides overnight accommodations to the public is required to collect state and county hotel taxes.

However, the issue arises when home-sharing hosts fail to collect state and county hotel taxes from their patrons. To exasperate the problem, online rental companies (AirBnB, HomeAway, etc.) that hosts use to advertise their rentable space are not required to collect the hotel occupancy tax. Further, many rental companies do not want to release the names of their hosts. This issue is prevalent in the Pocono region. By requiring online home-sharing companies to register with the state, hosts can be held accountable for their tax obligations, allowing traditional overnight lodging businesses the ability to fairly compete in the industry.

In addition to creating fair competition, the bill will allow for accurate hotel tax revenue for the state and counties. Closing the tax loophole is essential for the survival of PMVB and for the success of the region. PMVB relies on the 3% of the hotel tax for overall the tourism budget. Since many home-sharers are not registered, it's difficult to determine how much revenue the state and counties are losing now. Regardless, it's important to get back on track and level the playing field. For every \$1 invested in tourism, there is an average \$3 return to the Commonwealth. Thus, the more dollars invested in the area, the more return on investment the state will receive.

By supporting this bill, you will be supporting not only the Pocono region, but also the statewide tourism industry.

Thank you for taking the time to consider these comments,

Chris Barnett

Chris Barrett
President/CEO
Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau