



Economic Impact of Tourism
House Commerce and Economic Development Committee
Ronda Berns, Vice President of Tourism, Vermont Chamber of Commerce
January 30, 2019

Dear Chairman Marcotte and Members of the Committee,

The Vermont Chamber of Commerce is a statewide organization that represents nearly 1500 members with over half of the membership in the restaurant and tourism industry. 90% of our members are small businesses with under 50 employees. We are the official statewide partner to the American Hotel Lodging Association and the National Restaurant Association, both of which provide extensive resources to keep Chamber members and staff informed of industry news nationally.

The tourism industry in Vermont supports 32,204 jobs, generates \$391 million in tax revenues and provides \$2.8 billion in economic impact to the state annually. Over 13.1 million visitors come to Vermont each year, creating demand for employees from entry level to management positions across the state. The industry offers multiple opportunities for the training and professional development of entry level employees to facilitate their advancement to managerial positions, without the need for a college degree.

Workforce Development options for Vermonters in the food service industry may be obtained through one of the Vermont Chamber's ServSafe training programs offered annually through our National Restaurant Association partnership. This program certifies workers and managers in the health, safety and handling of food in our state. The program is open to all Vermont businesses and classes are held in multiple regions around the state to educate and certify employees in service positions and management positions.

The Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing and the Vermont Chamber collaborate on the creation of collateral and digital marketing to attract visitors to Vermont. These marketing products include the digital Stay & Play Directory on VermontVacation.com and the Official Vermont Vacation Guides that are distributed throughout New England, Canada, and Europe. This includes distribution to Vermont Welcome Centers and businesses throughout the State, and online as an eGuide. Marketing materials are concurrently issued through social media, including Facebook (VisitVT) and Instagram (visitvermont), where we continue to see a high volume of visitor interaction and engagement across the platforms.

The “Love Where You Live” editorial in the Vermont Vacation Guide encourages visitors to consider relocating to the state by highlighting five people in each publication that have fallen in love with Vermont as a visitor and then came back to live, work and play here. These featured Vermonters were at one time a visitor who came to the state to participate in a recreational sport, attended a wedding, see family or attend school, and then decided to make Vermont their home. Interested visitors, who may see themselves as potential new residents, are directed to the ThinkVermont.com site to begin the journey to find a job.

Another economic growth opportunity is the group tour market. The Vermont Tourism Network, a division of the Vermont Chamber, is the State’s partner in interactions with the lucrative group tour market. Annually, the Chamber attends 14 tradeshows around the nation to market and promote Vermont to over 400 tour operators and planners. Group tours are vital to the success of many of Vermont’s small businesses, by providing revenue streams through visitor’s overnight stays, purchased food, beverages and gifts that they bring back to their homes.

In closing, the tourism industry in Vermont is a significant economic driver for the State. For the goal ahead and with your support of the tourism industry, we will continue to grow this market to benefit all Vermonters and the State with billions of dollars in economic output and impact annually, jobs, tax revenue, and the ability to attract and recruit more workers to live, work and play.

Sincerely,

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