

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

Lindsay H. Kurrle, Secretary

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TO: Members of the H.493 Committee of Conference
House Appropriations Committee Chair, Rep. Robyn Scheu
House Appropriations Committee Vice Chair, Rep. Jim Harrison
House Appropriations Committee, Rep. Tiffany Bluemle
Senate Appropriations Chair, Sen. Andrew Perchilik
Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Richard Westman
Senate Appropriations Committee, Sen. Ginny Lyons

FROM: Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary
Agency of Commerce and Community Development

RE: Request to Restore VDTM Base Funding in FY'26

Members of the H.493 Conference Committee,

The Agency of Commerce and Community Development respectfully requests the Committee of Conference on the FY '26 budget to reconsider and fully restore base funding to the Vermont Department of Tourism and Marketing (VDTM) in the FY'26 budget.

For context, and during our budget planning cycle, VDTM *strategically reallocated existing* dollars within its budget—not to increase spending, but to better align limited resources with evolving priorities. Specifically, we *shifted funds internally* to bolster our grant programs, which are critical tools for driving visitation, relocation, retention, supporting local economies, and amplifying Vermont's visibility in a competitive tourism market.

However, the Legislature's decision to remove this "increase" was perhaps made under the assumption that it represented *new* funding. In reality, this was not an increase in our overall budget—it was a thoughtful reprioritization of current base funds. The removal of this funding, therefore, *doesn't simply eliminate an addition*; it actually results in a net reduction to our baseline budget. This undermines not only the reallocated grant funding, but also compromises other core operations of the Department that were maintained only through this internal balancing.

Tourism remains a key economic engine for Vermont, supporting thousands of small businesses and jobs across all regions. Vermont's Tourism industry brings in about \$4B annually, supports 31,000 jobs, and represents 9.3% of Vermont's GDP. At a time when



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competition for visitors is fierce and federal rhetoric concerning our neighbors to the north is tense, reducing our capacity to market Vermont and support partners on the ground risks long-term consequences for our state's economy.

The Agency asks that the Committee restore VDTM's funding to the level the legislature has historically funded the department at in base funding allocations, and to the levels in the Governor's Recommend. To be clear, **this restoration would not represent new spending, but rather the preservation of an already-lean (and well below other states tourism and marketing budgets by more than half), mission-driven budget that was adjusted in good faith to better serve Vermont's current local and regional needs.**

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Lindsay Kurrle, Secretary

Agency of Commerce and Community Development

