



April 18, 2017

The Honorable John Braun  
Chair, Senate Ways & Means Committee  
202 John A. Cherberg Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Timm Ormsby  
Chair, House Appropriations Committee  
315 John L. O'Brien Building  
Olympia, WA 98504

**RE:** Letter of Support SB 5251 / HB 1123

Dear Senator Braun and Representative Ormsby:

**We at the Pacific Northwest Chapter of the British-American Business Council share our support for the creation of a *Washington State Tourism Marketing Program* by means of HB 1123 / SB 5251, and we encourage our elected officials in Washington state to support this important legislation.**

International travelers comprise a robust and growing segment of visitors to the Pacific Northwest region. According to figures released last spring from Visit Seattle, international visitors represent just over 17 percent of total visitor spending in the city – they stay longer and spend more than domestic travelers. Additional figures shared by the Port of Seattle indicate an increase of international arrivals at Sea-Tac last year by more than 14 percent, an indicator that this area continues to grow as a key destination.

As an international organization working to promote strong business and cultural ties between the UK and Washington state, we believe it is important to continue investing in tourism, particularly international tourism, helping to support our Pacific Northwest region and its communities. The expansion of international flight availability – with additional routes offered by Delta Air Lines, the newly established Virgin Atlantic London to Seattle route, and soon to be established Norwegian Air flights – further serve to increase the capacities and avenues of international visitor access to Washington state.

These visitor revenues can, and will, significantly contribute to Washington state's economy, particularly the many smaller and rural cities across the region that often rely on tourism to support their communities. As the fourth largest industry in our state, tourism provides valuable revenue streams for local business, creates additional jobs and benefits many of Washington's related market sectors such as retail, recreation, food and beverage, and hospitality.

The robust benefits that can be realized from tourism growth warrant the support of a new statewide marketing program that can cohesively, collaboratively and effectively increase the reach and awareness of the whole of Washington state as a visitor destination, working to bring benefits and opportunities for business, industries and communities across region.

Catherine Filippini  
Executive Director

Gareth Wade  
Chairman of the Board

cc: The Honorable Mark Schoesler, Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Sharon Nelson, Senate Democratic Leader  
The Honorable Frank Chopp, Speaker  
The Honorable Rep. Pat Sullivan, House Majority Leader  
The Honorable Rep. Dan Kristiansen, House Republican Leader