



500 Market St. Portsmouth, NH 03801
PortsmouthCollaborative.org

January 18, 2026

Dear Chairman Harb and Members of the Resources, Recreation, and Development Committee,

On behalf of the Portsmouth business and tourism community, we write to express strong opposition to House Bill 1626 and the unintended consequences it would have for communities like Portsmouth that rely heavily on a healthy visitor economy.

Tourism is foundational to Portsmouth's economic vitality. Visitors support our local restaurants, hotels, retailers, cultural institutions, waterfront businesses, and seasonal employers, sustaining thousands of jobs and small businesses that are deeply woven into the fabric of our community. The success of our downtown, neighborhoods, and working waterfront is directly tied to effective statewide tourism promotion.

While we appreciate the intent of greater accountability and transparency in state spending, HB 1626, as written, would create a significant unfunded mandate for the Department of Business and Economic Affairs and the Division of Travel and Tourism Development. The bill requires extensive new research and reporting without providing funding to support that work. The estimated annual cost of \$350,000 to \$500,000 would inevitably pull limited resources away from the very marketing efforts that drive visitation to communities like Portsmouth.

For the local businesses and workers who depend on steady visitor traffic, this shift in focus is concerning. The Division of Travel and Tourism Development already operates with a lean staff dedicated to promoting New Hampshire destinations, supporting local partners, and generating economic activity. Requiring complex, line-item return-on-investment analysis for every expenditure over \$10,000 would place an operational burden on the division and reduce its ability to effectively market places like Portsmouth in an increasingly competitive tourism landscape.

It is also important to note that tourism marketing effectiveness is already being measured through professional research. Recent evaluations show an average return of approximately \$15 for every \$1 invested in tourism promotion. This success is reflected locally in strong Meals and Rentals tax revenues and continued demand for Portsmouth's lodging, dining, and attractions.

Tourism's impact in Portsmouth extends well beyond hotels and attractions. Visitor spending supports gas stations, grocery stores, pharmacies, urgent care centers, neighborhood shops, nonprofit fundraisers, and countless small, community-based services. These ripple effects are real and meaningful, yet they are difficult and costly to quantify through rigid, program-by-program ROI calculations. Reducing marketing capacity risks undermining this broader ecosystem that benefits residents and visitors alike.

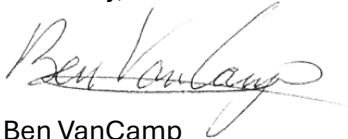
Destination marketing is not a short-term, transactional investment. It is a long-term strategy that builds awareness, reputation, and demand over time. HB 1626 risks oversimplifying how tourism

marketing works, increasing costs, and diminishing effectiveness—all while duplicating work that already demonstrates strong returns.

For communities like Portsmouth, where tourism supports economic resilience, workforce stability, and quality of place, these risks are significant. For these reasons, we respectfully urge the committee to oppose HB 1626.

Thank you for your service to the State of New Hampshire and your thoughtful consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Ben VanCamp". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Ben VanCamp
President & Chief Collaborator
Chamber Collaborative of Greater Portsmouth