



NOW THE REAL WORK BEGINS!

Welcome to late winter, Tourism Coalition Constituents. I attended ABA’s 2023 Marketplace (American Bus Association) last week, where there was a new sense of optimism and tourism promotion activity at a level that hasn’t been seen since prior to the pandemic. I was very happy to see Connecticut’s new booth on display. Many tourism marketing professionals from our state commented on how much excitement there was from worldwide tour operators interested in bringing groups to visit. I noticed that enthusiasm in my interactions while representing DATTCO, and the show’s positive energy and high attendance are great indicators for a healthy tourism season.

The legislative budget process is in full swing. The legislature will be targeting budget passage by their June 6th deadline. The governor’s budget address on February 8th was the first step in that process. The governor’s budget did not include any increases to the tourism marketing line item, which is consistent with a budget that is mostly flat-funded. Ideally, we would like to see that line item increased, however, adjustments to this area typically are driven by the legislature, not the governor. That makes our mission and work in the next few months even more important.

We have had extensive conversations with the legislature’s Appropriations Committee, as well as other legislators, and

expect that the marketing line item will be increased in the legislature’s version of the budget. We will then focus on advocating that any increases be maintained through the remainder of the budget process.

On a positive note, a bipartisan group of legislators have introduced a bill that would increase funding for tourism, arts and culture initiatives in Connecticut from its current level of \$21.4 million for 2022-23 to \$58.5 million. It’s important in the next few months that we all back this bill, HB-6321, AN ACT CONCERNING INCREASED INVESTMENT IN ARTS, CULTURE AND TOURISM. Our Executive Director Frank Burns has sent information out on this important bill, and we hope you all reach out to legislators and voice your support!

As always, I am grateful to our officers, board, membership and staff for their commitment and support, as we move through the busy spring season. I look forward to working with all of you, and our legislative leaders, as we continue to talk about the importance of tourism and its economic return on investment.

Paul Mayer
President, CT Tourism Coalition



MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:



Nature's Art Village is an amazing shopping experience and a day of family fun...ALL IN ONE!

Indulge yourself at The Shops at Nature's Art Village. With over 10,000 square feet of unique treasures from all over the world, The SHOPS has evolved into a collection of six unique shops in one convenient stop.

Always a treasure trove for the Fossil and Mineral enthusiast, The SHOPS now includes the region's largest source for beads and findings, an incredible collection of hand-picked, one-of-a-kind artistic jewelry, appealing gifts, and ageless educational toys to challenge the imagination.

The PAST Antiques Market and Museum at Nature's Art Village is an antique shopper's delight and a collector's showcase, featuring both South-eastern CT's newest antique shopping emporium and an amazing museum of historic marvels showcasing the rapid transformation of technology from steam engines to search engines. The Past Antiques Market has been proudly recognized as Yankee Magazine's Editors' Choice Winner of "Best Antique Stop" in New England for 2014.

The village is also home to The Dinosaur Place at Nature's Art Village outdoor adventure. Meet over 60 life-sized dinosaurs on 1.5 miles of easy nature trails wrapping around a scenic lake, and enjoy the kind of education that only hands-on exploration can deliver. Get lost in a "MAZE"asaurus – a mammoth-sized maze; stay cool in New England's largest Splashpad - a zero-depth water playground with dino-themed water cannons and much more.

While at Nature's Art Village, make sure to explore indoors and enjoy an adventured filled hands-on activity center, Discovery Depot at Nature's Art Village.

POLITICAL CHAMPION:

STATE REPRESENTATIVE CHRISTINE PALM



Christine Palm represents the 36th General Assembly district, covering the beautiful Connecticut River towns of Chester, Deep River, Essex and Haddam. Before being elected, she served as women's policy analyst for the General Assembly's Commission on Women, Children and Seniors (CWCS), a group that advocates for policies that enhance the safety and economic security of these three under-represented populations. Before that, she was communications director of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Women (PCSW). She also served as media director for the Office of the State Treasurer.

Having worked in both the Executive and Legislative branches of government, Palm understands the grave responsibilities and the singular opportunities of serving in the General Assembly. As a policy analyst charged with working on legislation to secure women's rights, she advised lawmakers on both sides of the aisle on such issues as paid family and medical leave, pay equity, domestic violence, the Baby Safe Haven adoption law, and human trafficking prevention. In addition, she assisted her colleagues at CWCS in their work on opioid prevention, school bus safety, early childhood literacy, anti-bullying measures, and protecting services for senior citizens, including Medicare and Medicaid.

Palm is the owner of Sexual Harassment Prevention, LLC, which works with corporate, academic and non-profit workplaces to protect workers, prevent lawsuits, and create workplace environments free from the devastating effects of sexual harassment. This is her first term as a state legislator.