



WAITING FOR FINAL BUDGET NEWS AS WE ALL GEAR UP FOR SUMMER TOURISM

I hope everyone is having a great Spring and getting ready for what should be a busy tourism season as we approach summer. I continue to applaud the efforts of Jason Mancini, Executive Director of the CT Humanities, Brett Thompson, Executive Director of the CT Arts Alliance and our CT Tourism Coalition Executive Director, Frank Burns. They have been tireless in traveling all over the State in-person and via ZOOM gathering support and educating State leaders, Chambers and other industry groups about the importance of funding the \$58.5 million Arts, Culture and Tourism Roadmap. We are all waiting for the final budget to come out in a few weeks and we will continue to advocate for the Roadmap funding in future sessions until the funding is completely in place. We are also grateful for the continued leadership and support of State Senator Cathy Osten, State Senator Heather Somers and Representative John-Michael Parker. We have also gathered support from all of the large Chambers in the State.

DECD is fortunate to have new Chief Marketing Officer Anthony Anthony, who was recently special advisor to Governor Lamont, as he provides his marketing background and expertise, energy and influence to both tourism and statewide marketing campaigns. He is developing a new brand for the state to replace the current "flag logo" that will remain separate from the existing CTVISIT tourism brand. The new state brand will be designed to work well with the existing CTVISIT brand, with no change planned for the CTVISIT brand direction.

The CT Office of Tourism, stewarded by the new Chief Marketing Officer, is moving full steam ahead with continuing the *Find Your Vibe* campaign following results data from last year that showed how well the campaign is working. The *Find Your Vibe* campaign, backed by a \$2.5 million media budget, started in April, an earlier start than year's past. It will continue on through Labor Day and includes a mix of high profile and core workhorse tactics. High profile tactics include huge station domination video takeovers in Moynihan Hall in Penn Station and Columbus Circle stations in NYC, and Boston's North Station. Other high-profile

tactics include video on Metro North Trains, street level video all over Manhattan, and seatback video on JetBlue, and in taxis. Videos will also be seen in gyms, salons, and on Marriott hotel in-room screens.

Aer Lingus has relaunched the service of the Dublin/Hartford direct flights. The CT Office of Tourism in partnership with Bradley Airport and Aer Lingus hosted an event in Late March at the edgy Vault section of Dublin's Epic Museum, immersed 95 key members of the Irish and European Media and travel trade professionals in colorful video and photo imagery showcasing Connecticut as vibrant, energetic, diverse and inclusive to encourage travel via Ireland into the State. Also supporting visitation to Connecticut from Ireland and key connecting European cities, is a paid media campaign specifically designed for this purpose that will run in relevant markets from the end of March through August. Speaking of International travel, I'm pleased that the Discover New England Travel Summit was a huge success in Boston resulting in over 200 tour operators from the UK with representation and sales efforts from all three of Connecticut's Tourism Regions. All of this positive activity is at a time when in-ternational travel seems to be getting back on its feet. Hopefully it will result in an increase in visitation.

Members like you continue to be our best ambassadors, and it's critical that we keep adding new members to our base. I will remind you again how critical it is to get behind the Arts, Culture and Tourism Roadmap and communicate that support to our legislators. As always, I am grateful to our officers, board, membership, and staff for their commitment and support. Here's to a busy and healthy Summer tourism season!

Paul Mayer
President, CT Tourism Coalition

For more information about the CT Tourism Coalition
or to become a member, please visit tourismCT.com

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT:

INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF ARTS & IDEAS

New Haven's International Festival of Arts & Ideas announced its 2023 slate of over a hundred performances, talks and other events from June 10-25. The Beninese Afropop singer/songwriter and four-time Grammy winner Angélique Kidjo is returning. Also headlining one of the many free concerts on New Haven Green is Cuban-born Grammy-winning vocalist Jon Secada. Other highlights include a theater show by comedian/activist Kristina Wong, political commentator Baratunde Thurston, the modern classical string quartet Brooklyn Rider, comedian/actor Zainab Johnson, and young jazz pianist Matthew Whitaker.

Of the more than 150 events on its 2023 schedule, 85% are free. Besides the large public concerts on New Haven Green and the indoor theater performances, the festival offers panel discussions on topical social issues, foodie events, bike tours, children's activities and - in May and early June - community festivals in five different New Haven neighborhoods.

The festival is one of the biggest tourist attractions of the year in Connecticut. The festival's main outdoor stage on New Haven Green has been updated this year with new lighting and a digital display board. Naming rights were sold for the venue, which is now known as the Alexander Clark Stage.

Full schedule and tickets at artidea.org.



POLITICAL CHAMPION: STATE REPRESENTATIVE TONI E. WALKER



Toni Edmonds Walker is a seasoned social activist and advocate for youth, education, and human rights. Having resided in New Haven for most of her childhood and adult life, Toni has deep roots at Dixwell Congregation where her father, the late Rev. Dr. Edwin R. Edmonds, was the pastor and her mother, the late Maye Bailey Edmonds, was head of the Women's Group. There, Toni worked as both a fundraiser and the Director of the Dixwell Children's Creative Arts Center - a children's inner city program for arts and music. While managing The Arts Center and raising a daughter alone, she continued her baccalaureate education at Southern Connecticut State University and received a Master's Degree in Social Work at Fordham University.

As a state representative, Toni serves as House Chair of the Appropriations Committee and is also a member of the Judiciary Committee. She is a former House chair of the Human Services Committee as well. Rep. Walker also created and chaired both the Juvenile Jurisdiction Planning and Implementation Committee and the Juvenile Jurisdiction Policy and Operations Coordinating Council. She is also an active member of the Financial Advisory Council, serving as Speaker Donovan's appointee. In addition, Rep. Walker has been appointed to serve on several policy committees by legislative forums; including the National Conference of State Legislatures as Vice-Chair of the Human Services Committee, and the Council of State Governments as Vice Chair of the ERC Criminal Justice Advisory Board and Chair of the ERC Budget & Tax Committee. The Council of State Governments also once recognized Rep. Walker as a Tolls Fellow.

Furthermore, Rep. Walker is dedicated to the CT Black and Puerto Rican Caucus and is a member of the Adolescent Parenting Council, Local Interagency Service Team, Domestic Violence Legislative Task Force, Commission on Children, Medicaid Care Management Oversight Council, Behavioral Health Partnership Oversight Council, TANF Council, Children in the Recession Legislative Task Force, and Task Force on Community.