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May 23, 2025

Dear Chairman Cirino, Vice Chair Chavez, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Finance Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on FY2026-27 State Operating Budget and specifically amendment SC 0197. My name is Eric Wobser, and I serve as CEO of the Greater Sandusky Partnership, a regional chamber and economic development organization representing businesses throughout the Erie County and Sandusky Bay region.

We are united in our concern over SC 0197. The amendment allows for redirection of lodging tax without engaging the very people and businesses that generate those revenues. This approach lacks transparency, undermines collaboration, and threatens the momentum we have worked so hard to achieve.

Tourism is the backbone of our local economy. Erie County generates 60% more in sales tax than comparable counties—driven by visitor spending. In Sandusky, more than \$12 million of the City's \$35 million general fund comes from direct tourism revenue, up over \$9 million annually in the last decade. These funds support everything from first responders to new parks and roadways.

Successful models already exist. When public and private stakeholders worked together to launch the Cedar Point Sports Center, it wasn't just about tourism—it was about community progress. That's the kind of process we need moving forward.

Please reject SC 0197 and help us preserve the transparent, collaborative momentum that is propelling our great region. We believe the conversation about the future of tourism investment is both timely and essential – but it must start with transparency and conversations at the local level. Again, I would like to thank Chairman Cirino and the esteemed members of this committee for their time. I would be more than happy to answer any questions the Committee may have.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Eric Wobser", written in a cursive style.

Eric Wobser
Chief Executive Officer