

PROVIDENCE WARWICK CONVENTION & VISITORS BUREAU

May 29, 2025

The Honorable Marvin Abney
Chair, House Committee on Finance
82 Smith St
Providence, RI 02903

Chairman Abney and Members of the Committee,

On behalf of the Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau (PWCVB), I respectfully submit this letter of opposition to House Bill 6334, proposing to implement a \$2 tax on ticket sales for venues with 800 or more seats.

Our organization works diligently with our partners to position Providence as a premier destination for leisure tourism, as well as meetings, conventions, and sporting events, which bring visitors – and tourism dollars – to communities across the state. One of the area's defining features is our arts and cultural community. Performances, shows and events at iconic and historic venues like the Providence Performing Arts Center and the VETS help shape the city's unique character. And it's our accessibility and relative affordability that draw visitors looking for a night out - or weekend getaway - that is both convenient and less expensive than those in neighboring cities.

Should promoters and event organizers choose to overlook Providence in favor of more tax-friendly cities, the negative impact would extend far beyond the venues themselves. Fewer events and shows would undermine our local economy, and undo years of strategic tourism efforts aimed at branding Providence as The Creative Capital.

For example, the PWCVB and our partners recently wrapped up the inaugural Providence Culinary Collective, which was met with great enthusiasm by nearly 2,000 ticketed guests across 35 food and wine events. The festival ran alongside the first-ever Lil' Rhody Laugh Riot produced by the VETS, which brought 18,000 ticketed attendees to comedy shows across the city and generating more than \$1.5 million in direct spending. The comedy festival attracted national headliners performing 30 shows, which received rave reviews and drew audiences in both the drive and fly markets who may not have chosen to visit Providence otherwise. Both the PWCVB and the VETS plan to produce these ticketed events next year, building lucrative weekend business for the city during a normally quiet time.

This bill's implications could stretch far beyond leisure tourism – it also poses a threat to the booming sports industry in Rhode Island. Events booked by the Rhode Island Sports Commission, a division of the PWCVB, generated more than \$44 million in direct spend in the last fiscal year alone. For example, the Providence/Warwick area benefitted immensely from hosting the NCAA Division I Men's Basketball Tournament in March, a highly sought-after bid that another city could easily win if additional taxes discourage ticket sales or cause the league to consider a more tax-friendly venue.

We hope that you will continue to support Rhode Island's tourism industry by rejecting this proposed tax.

Sincerely,



Kristen L. Adamo
President & CEO
Providence Warwick Convention & Visitors Bureau