



Representative John Lincoln;:

My Name is Kelly Bender and my husband and I own Lazy Otter Charters, in Whittier.

This summer we will be operating 4 boats in Prince William Sound, a fleet of rental kayaks, and a coffee and gift shop and hire up to 20 Alaskans seasonally and 4-6 Alaskans part time thought out the winter.

As responsible business owners we have to continually foster our business, look out for our employees and continue to invest in our company as well as in the industry and state we do business.

We are doing just that, we are currently having a new 30 passenger vessel built and brought into service in June 2018. We operate year-round and are increasing our year-round business, in fact have operated 4 sightseeing trips this week, dropped off skiers in PWS back country and preparing for a film shoot in a few weeks. WE are working hard to participate in the local economy. But there wouldn't be more boats, or summer or winter jobs if we didn't promote our business. If visitors don't know what we do, they won't use our services. We have to actively go out and find customers. We have to pay for advertisements, we have to travel to trade shows, we have to be active on social media.

This is business 101, These are the things you do to take care of your business if you want to succeed.

Tourism is Alaska's business. There are thousands of jobs – year-round jobs supported by this industry, there are hundreds of small business feeding their families off this industry, there are countless business owners investing in this industry – investing in the state. Just like a responsible business owner, the legislature should be caring for, fostering, and investing Alaska's business's. People won't come if they don't know what we have here in Alaska, they won't come here if they don't know what we do here in Alaska, what we offer here in Alaska.

Alaska is out marketed by nearly every state in the nation. Every other state in the nation clearly understands the importance of promotion, and the value of tourism industry for economic growth.

To be competitive, Alaska's Travel industry must have a strong tourism marketing program, it is crucial.

As a business involved in Alaska's diverse tourism industry, we support the industry's efforts to develop a long-range solution for sustainable tourism marketing funding. We support a tourism marketing assessment; and establishing a tourism marketing fund. We support the Tourism Improvement District (TID) model. We also strongly support that current revenue generated from existing taxes on the tourism industry, like the Vehicle Rental Car Tax (VRT), go back to the industry as originally intended.

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The impact of the visitor industry is clear with more than 2million visitors last year and a statewide economic impact of over \$4. Billion dollars. Be clear these people did not magically appear, but due to years of a diligent aggressive marketing program. After 2017's devastating 1.7-million-dollar funding, the number of visitors will NOT maintain at this level without a comprehensive, sustainable marketing plan. We are already lagging behind in marketing, we cannot afford to wait.

Please support this important legislation which would ensure the long-term growth of Alaska's travel industry.

Thank you,
Kelly Bender

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From: Rep. John Lincoln
Sent: Monday, March 19, 2018 4:27 PM
To: Larry Persily <Larry.Persily@akleg.gov>
Subject: FW: Testimony for Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism House

From: Kirkawa <kirkawa@aol.com>
Sent: Tuesday, March 6, 2018 12:10 PM
To: Rep. John Lincoln <Rep.John.Lincoln@akleg.gov>; Rep. Bryce Edgmon <Rep.Bryce.Edgmon@akleg.gov>; Rep. Andy Josephson <Rep.Andy.Josephson@akleg.gov>; Rep. Chris Tuck <Rep.Chris.Tuck@akleg.gov>; Rep. Gary Knopp <Rep.Gary.Knopp@akleg.gov>; Rep. Mark Neuman <Rep.Mark.Neuman@akleg.gov>; Rep. David Talerico <Rep.David.Talerico@akleg.gov>
Cc: kirk@alaska-wildland.com
Subject: Testimony for Arctic Policy, Economic Development, and Tourism House

Here is my testimony today on HB 383. Thank you for the opportunity to share my perspectives.

Hi, my name is Kirk Hoessle, and I am President of Alaska Wildland Adventures. Our year around offices are in Girdwood, and we operate three lodges on the Kenai Peninsula. We also offer multi-day, small group adventure programs that venture from the Kenai to Denali National Park and Fairbanks. We started our business in 1977, and I have been leading it for 36 years.

We employ a dozen year around staff and over 100 seasonal workers, many of which are residents who live in rural Alaska.

I want to speak strongly in favor of Alaska's Destination Marketing Program and strongly in favor of establishing the Tourism Improvement District, or TID.

Research throughout the US has shown that if you want to have a strong and diversified travel and tourism economy that is far reaching into rural areas, it is essential to have a strong and well funded destination marketing program. While I am no longer directly involved, for about 12 years, from 2000 to 2012, I served on Alaska's Marketing Committee. A very impressive and evolving body of work has been developed over time. The research that has been undertaken over the many years that this program has been operating clearly demonstrates that the programs work well and provide outstanding return on the investment. Let's keep a very good think going.

My business enjoyed some few very strong years directly following the years when the spending for the programs were at high levels, culminating in outstanding years for 2015 and 2016. Yet, for 2017 we began to see a decline in trip inquiries and website visits for the first time in many, many years. We also experienced a modest decline in revenue while spending even more aggressively in our own marketing programs. I believe this is directly connected to the severely reduced marketing programs the last couple years and it is catching up with us. My sense is that we are starting to see the fallout from not consistently reinvesting in our Destination Marketing Programs. And I am very concerned for small businesses throughout the state, especially those who operate in rural and remote areas. The future does not bode well unless we correct the situation.

I very much support the TID concept as presented in HB383, and I feel it is a good solution for our current fiscal situation. It allows visitors to directly fund the programs through specific taxes and assessments.

We are not inventing the wheel here, as I was encouraged to learn that these concepts have been very successful for the state of California, as well as for a great number of cities and communities in California throughout the country. I urge you to support HB383.

Thank you very much for your time.

Kirk Hoessle, President and CEO (Chief Exploration Officer)
Alaska Wildland Adventures

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From: Daniel Oberlatz <dan@alaskaalpineadventures.com>
Sent: Friday, March 9, 2018 7:48 AM
To: Rep. John Lincoln <Rep.John.Lincoln@akleg.gov>
Subject: Tourism marketing legislation

Hello Representative Lincoln,

My name is Dan Oberlatz and I own Alaska Alpine Adventures - an adventure travel company based in Anchorage that operates throughout mainland Alaska.

As a business involved in Alaska's diverse tourism industry, we support the industry's efforts to develop a long-range solution for sustainable tourism marketing funding.

As you're well aware, due to current budgetary challenges at the State, the tourism marketing program has been significantly reduced. In two years, it has decreased by 90% and is currently only \$3 million. At this level, Alaska cannot compete with other destinations to attract visitors and continue the growth in economic benefits. In fact, Alaska is faced with losing market share to our competitors, translating to lost revenue in taxes and fees and visitor spending. Furthermore, without adequate funding, it's going to be even more challenging for our Great State to promote emerging destinations within Alaska, namely Southwest and other rural parts of Alaska.

Please support House Bill 383 and its companion bill on the Senate side, which would ensure the long-term growth of Alaska's travel industry. Thank you!

Dan

Dan Oberlatz | Alaska Alpine Adventures
Owner-Guide
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"Best Adventure Travel Companies on Earth" 2008 & 2009 - *National Geographic Adventure Magazine*

"50 Tours of a Lifetime" 2010 - *National Geographic Traveler Magazine*