

**NORTHERN MICHIGAN CHAMBER**  
**ALLIANCE**

**ALPENA • BENZIE • CADILLAC • CHARLEVOIX • GAYLORD  
PETOSKEY • TRAVERSE CITY • MANISTEE • MARQUETTE**

August 29, 2018

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing concerning Senate Bills 1065-1068 on behalf of the Northern Michigan Chamber Alliance. As we understand it, the legislation would create a large special events fund within the state Department of Treasury, and allow Convention and Visitors Bureaus (CVBs) from around the state to apply for grants from the fund in an effort to attract large and special events to their regions.

We believe the concept of the legislation is strong, and that the state may be at a disadvantage in attracting events to the state. However, we also believe more could be done to ensure that small and rural CVBs are able to compete for and use the grants laid out in this proposal.

Our challenge in northern Michigan has often been that statewide programs don't properly take into consideration the needs and opportunities relative to the size of our markets or infrastructure capabilities as rural and small metro markets. To that end, our preference would be to see more tiers for smaller CVBs and rural regions. These are regions where a "large event" would not meet the thresholds in the statute, but for which the events would have a large impact on the region.

At the very least, lowering the minimum out-of-state visitor threshold to a number at or below 500 would be more in line with the 5,000 and 1,500 ratios envisioned for the larger CVBs in the metro Detroit and metro Grand Rapids areas.

While we understand the economics of needing to replenish the fund with new sales, use, and liquor taxes to ensure future stability of the grant program, a lower threshold will allow northern Michigan communities to truly and realistically compete for off-season events that will help our service industry flourish year around.

Without lowering the threshold, it will be very hard for us to support this legislation with our legislators, as we don't feel the current language would realistically allow many regions to compete equally.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this request. Please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss further.

Sincerely,



Kent Wood  
Director of Government Relations