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May 13, 2014

The Honorable Gus Bilirakis
U.S. House of Representatives
2313 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Bilirakis:

On behalf of the more than 800 frontline tourism leaders that comprise the membership of the Southeast Tourism Society (STS) we write to offer our strong support for H.R. 4450, The Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act of 2014. This vital legislation would reauthorize the Corporation for Travel Promotion, which operates as Brand USA, allowing the public-private partnership to continue its important work promoting the U.S. abroad and attracting international visitor to our communities.

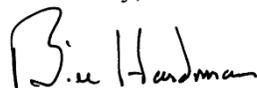
International travel is a major economic driver for the U.S. economy. When international visitors travel to the United States, they inject new money into the U.S. economy by staying in hotels, spending in stores, visiting attractions and eating at restaurants. In 2013, international visitors to the U.S. spent \$180.7 billion, making it the leading service export of all U.S. industries. We applaud your leadership in leveraging the economic impact of tourism to drive job creation and economic development at the state and local level.

STS is a not-for-profit membership association that works to elevate the talents and strategies of travel and tourism organizations and individual professionals within its twelve state region: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia. STS's mission is to strengthen the economic vitality of the region by uniting all segments of the travel and tourism industry through collaboration, education, advocacy, networking, and recognition.

Brand USA has drawn broad support from the diverse travel and tourism sector because it is required to spend promotional funds equally on smaller communities and the large urban gateway cities. This provision in the enacting law ensures that the economic benefits of the continued growth of travel and tourism is shared broadly by the states, communities, small business, and tourism workers.

We stand ready to work with you on passage of this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Bill Hardman
President & CEO
Southeast Tourism Society



Alisa Bailey
President & CEO
Charleston, West Virginia Convention & Visitors Bureau