

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

March 25, 2021

Mr. Jeffrey Zients
White House COVID Coordinator
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Zients:

Thank you for your dedication to the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force. We appreciate the efforts by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to keep Americans healthy and mitigate the spread of COVID-19. However, we write with concern about the CDC's continued restrictions on the cruise industry, and the economic toll it is taking on so many in our states that rely on this important industry.

In October 2020, the CDC issued a Framework for Conditional Sailing as a phased approach to the safe resumption of cruise operations. In doing so, the CDC assured the cruise industry it would release detailed phases in order to resume full cruise operations. To-date, however, the CDC has still not issued Phase II requirements. We are disappointed that the CDC has been neither transparent nor forthright with the cruise industry, leaving a sector that is a significant economic driver for our states at a standstill, and affecting jobs in all major ports and surrounding cities.

The cruise industry has faced unique challenges amid this pandemic, and is one of the only industries that is completely precluded from resuming normal operations. This has created a dramatic negative ripple effect on the Florida and Alaskan families, businesses, ports and communities that rely on the cruise industry. If the CDC does not quickly commit to start communicating timely and effective guidance, as well as hold frequent and productive meetings with cruise industry stakeholders, it will have harmful impacts on another peak season for the cruise industry.

It has been over a year since our nation first shutdown due to COVID-19. We now have better information to keep Americans healthy, mitigate the virus, and provide the resources and tools to a variety of industries, such as tourism and travel, so they may safely resume. President Biden stated that the United States will have enough vaccine doses for every American adult by the end of May, with a goal of returning to our "new normal" by July 4, 2021. Yet, the Administration has overlooked an entire industry by failing to provide guidance for the safe resumption of cruises. The future of the cruise industry and thousands of good paying jobs at our states' ports and supporting businesses are now at stake. We stand ready to assist the COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force as it makes recommendations that balance reopening the economy and mitigating the spread of COVID-19.

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As we work together to bring this important industry back, we request a response to the following questions:

- When will the CDC provide more details related to the phases of its Framework for Conditional Sailing?
- What criteria does the CDC use to determine the next phase of reopening? What is the timeline?
- What more does the cruise industry need to do to assure the CDC it is ready for the safe resumption of operations?
- Does the CDC understand the economic impact its lack of communication and transparency has on the cruise industry and associated businesses and local communities? What is the Administration's plan to create more open lines of communication between government and the private sector?
- Who is the official that has responsibility for the decisions about when and how the cruise industry can restart under the restrictions put in place by the CDC?
- What is the process, either within the CDC, or within the Administration to make and implement these decisions, and what other agencies are involved in the decision making process?
- When the Conditional Sailing Order was issued last October, there were no vaccines and the disease was on an upward trajectory. Today, we are in completely different public health environment. What is the CDC planning to do to address this very different set of circumstances?

Again, thank you again for your hard work to keep families safe and healthy. We look forward to your responses and the release of timely and effective guidance for the important cruise industry.

Sincerely,



Rick Scott
United States Senator



Marco Rubio
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan
United States Senator



Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

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Representative Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Representative Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



Representative Carlos A. Gimenez
Member of Congress



Representative Bill Posey
Member of Congress



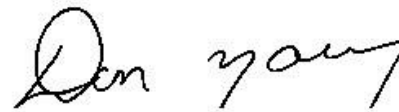
Representative John Rutherford
Member of Congress



Representative Maria Elvira Salazar
Member of Congress



Representative Michael Waltz
Member of Congress



Representative Don Young
Member of Congress

cc Dr. Rochelle Walensky, Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention