

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

February 15, 2022

Mr. Jeffrey Zients  
White House COVID Coordinator  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Zients,

We write today with great concern regarding the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) new *COVID-19 Program for Cruise Ships* and the continued Level 4 Travel Advisory for cruise ships. This position is not backed by facts or science, does not meaningfully improve public health outcomes, and unfairly punishes constituents and businesses who rely on the cruise industry for their livelihood.

The cruise industry restarted operations in the United States, last June. Since that time, more than 100 cruise ships have returned to U.S. waters, carrying more than two million people. Unlike other comparable industries in the travel and tourism sector that are not subject to the CDC's Level 4 travel warning, the cruise industry utilizes comprehensive protocols to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, including testing, vaccination, screening, sanitation, mask-wearing, and other science-backed measures. In fact, testing rates on cruise ships are more than 20 times greater than the testing rate on land, and vaccination rates onboard a cruise ship significantly outpace land-based environments, with many ships having upwards of 100 percent of passengers and crew vaccinated. Indeed, these rates of testing and vaccinations far exceed what has been done on land. No doubt, these steps led to the industry's successful operations during the Omicron surge. Not only were case rates lower than on land, but there were only a handful of cases that required hospitalization over this time, thus not burdening the U.S. health care system.

Yet, while the cruise industry has exceeded the goals established by the CDC, now the goalposts have been moved without a clear understanding of why the CDC is unilaterally choosing to do so and acting contrary to current public health trends, including CDC's own recommendations for the general public. Again, no comparable requirements have been imposed on other industries or modes of transportation, and CDC's continued micromanagement of cruise industry operations is far afield from this agency's expertise and its ordinarily limited role as a federal regulator. The CDC compares cruise ships to prisons, nursing homes and homeless shelters. However, we find the comparison is entirely inappropriate and without merit. The CDC has not regulated prisons, nursing homes and homeless shelters the same way they have cruise ships and moreover their vaccination rates are not comparable to cruise line guests or employees.

With the industry's unparalleled health protocols, impressive COVID data and track

record, and the country's improved public health conditions, we believe that this new "Voluntary" CDC program is completely inexplicable, as is their method of oversight as a regulatory body. It sets arbitrary and capricious requirements for a single industry, contains a back door booster mandate just to enjoy what is already occurring throughout the United States with respect to the removal of masks, social distancing, and isolation and quarantine requirements. Stakeholders ranging from the industry to state and federal legislators to other federal agencies have continually asked CDC to provide data to support these positions, but the silence is telling.

With this new policy and continued Level 4 advisory, the CDC is prolonging the economic devastation of the cruise industry and their community partners, including hoteliers, restaurants, airlines, longshoremen, food wholesalers, tour operators, local governments, ports, and thousands more by mandating requirements which reflect conditions that no longer exist and with total disregard for the documented data that demonstrates the success of the industry's existing protocols to operate safely.

Cruise operators have responsibly restarted with all the necessary safeguards to protect public health and safety, and the facts do not justify the CDC's efforts to unfairly target a single industry. We ask that you reconsider the CDC's Level 4 travel advisory for cruises and consider intervening to modify the proposed voluntary program to treat the industry fairly and based on science and data. Thank you for your full and fair consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



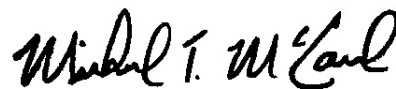
Carlos A. Gimenez  
Member of Congress



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



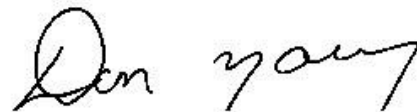
Sam Graves  
Member of Congress



Michael T. McCaul  
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



Don Young  
Member of Congress



Kat Cammack  
Member of Congress



Charlie Crist  
Member of Congress



Gus Bilirakis  
Member of Congress



Bill Posey  
Member of Congress



Mike Waltz  
Member of Congress



Brian Mast  
Member of Congress



Beth Van Duyne  
Member of Congress



Nicole Malliotakis  
Member of Congress



Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress



Neal P. Dunn, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster  
Member of Congress



Randy K. Weber  
Member of Congress



Doug LaMalfa  
Member of Congress



Scott Franklin  
Member of Congress



Stacey E. Plaskett  
Member of Congress



Byron Donalds  
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress



Andy Harris, M.D.  
Member of Congress



Nancy Mace  
Member of Congress



John H. Rutherford  
Member of Congress



Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress



Garret Graves  
Member of Congress