



February 3, 2021

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
United States Senate
522 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Dan Sullivan
United States Senate
702 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Don Young
United States House of Representatives
2314 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Michael J. Dunleavy
Governor of Alaska
Alaska State Capitol
Juneau, AK 99801

Senators Murkowski and Sullivan, Congressman Young, and Governor Dunleavy,

On behalf of the more than 600 business members of the Alaska Travel Industry Association (ATIA) and our partners at the Alaska State Chamber and the Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc., thank you for your efforts over the past year to support Alaska businesses, their employees, and your constituents during the COVID-19 pandemic. This has been a difficult year for all of us, and we deeply appreciate your commitment to public service.

In October 2020, ATIA established a Return to Cruising (RTC) working group focused on supporting Alaska's communities and the cruise industry as it looks to provide a safe experience for staff and guests and fostering an understanding of the needs of the visitor industry and the cruise industry with diverse stakeholder groups. This group is comprised of port professionals, tourism industry representatives, and business leaders. Our goal is to return cruising to Alaska in 2021, if it is safe to do so.

We are concerned, however, at the lack of progress of various government entities, such as the Center for Disease Control (CDC) in the United States and Transport Canada, in helping to plan and prepare for the 2021 season. Those in our industry know how critical the first few months of the year are for booking Alaska cruises. Cruise lines continue to extend their pause of operations in the U.S., causing potential travelers to Alaska to question the likelihood the industry will operate. As a highly seasonal industry, the loss of even a single month (after a year of limited to no operations) will mean certain closure for hundreds of small businesses throughout the state. If we are going to have a chance to recover this year, it is paramount we see movement soon.

Approval from the CDC is only one barrier to cruising's return to Alaska waters, ports, and communities.

As you are aware, foreign-flagged cruise ships are not allowed to sail directly from U.S. port to U.S. port per the Passenger Vessel Services Act (PVSA). Canada has closed its ports to cruise traffic until the end of February and there is no clear date for resumption. We need additional action by the U.S.



Government to allow cruising to Alaska such as a temporary waiver to home port requirements under PVSA, an exemption by the Canadian government to allow technical stops in either Vancouver or Victoria, or some other mechanism to allow Alaska cruises. We need your help in developing a strategy and advocating for these changes at the highest levels.

Alaska's visitor industry supports Alaskans through direct employment and also thousands of indirect jobs such as suppliers and truck drivers. The economic effects ripple even further. Tourism employs Alaskans as teachers, public safety officers, and other public employees through unrestricted tax revenue to state and local governments. Directly and indirectly, tourism is a major driver in Alaska's economy, and in fact, throughout the Pacific Northwest.

Currently, 11 ships have cancelled all Alaska sailings, and others have already reduced their Alaska schedules. This represents a loss of more than 350,000 potential passengers and more than \$218 million in visitor spending in Alaska. One ship alone, Royal Caribbean's Quantum of the Seas, represents a loss of nearly 95,000 passengers. The potential absence of these ships, and the potential of all ships in Alaska this summer, will irrevocably damage businesses and communities in all regions of the state that benefit from land excursions, pre-and post-cruise activities, transportation services, supplemental marketing, and other ancillary services. We need the safe return of cruising for tourism to work for Alaska.

As always, thank you for your leadership and ongoing efforts on behalf of Alaska's visitor industry, for Alaska's business community, and all Alaskans.

Sincerely,

Sarah Leonard
ATIA President & CEO

Kati Capozzi
Alaska Chamber President and CEO

Marleanna Hall
Resource Development Council for Alaska, Inc.
Executive Director