



Promoting and Advocating for Business and Community Development since 1845

May 18, 2021

Dear Members of the Texas Congressional Delegation:

As greater numbers of Americans are vaccinated and more businesses and U.S. states and territories reopen, the cruise industry remains the only sector of the U.S. economy that is expressly prohibited from operating. Nearly 450,000 Americans, from hotel, restaurant and retail workers, transportation operators, longshore workers, travel agents, and tens of thousands of small- and medium-sized businesses continue to suffer the economic harm they have had to endure since March 2020.

There has been significant progress made with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in recent weeks, but there is much work left to be done to ensure a responsible resumption of sailing this summer. Right now, cruise industry and many other workers still have no definitive, workable timeline for when a realistic return to cruising will enable them to work again.

Here in Texas, we know well the importance of travel and tourism and the critical financial contributions visitors make to our states, as well as the role that the Port of Galveston plays in supporting the overall strength of the Texas economy. Before the pandemic cruising was responsible for about 1.1 million cruise passenger embarkations at the Port of Galveston, which in turn supported almost 27,000 jobs in Texas, which paid \$1.8 billion in wages and created over \$1.6 billion in direct spending in the local and state economy.

Of course, the effects of COVID-19 and resulting shutdown were a severe blow. As of the end of March 2021, economic losses in Texas totaled a \$1.2 billion reduction in direct expenditures, 23,000 total job reductions, and \$1.6 billion in total wages reduction.

The cruise industry should be treated like any other hospitality and tourism sector in order to get back on track and allowing their employees and their suppliers and vendors, and others who rely on them to get back to work. The science and other evidence are clear – the cruise industry can reopen safely. With proper safety protocols in place, nearly 400,000 passengers have already safely cruised since last summer in Europe, the South Pacific, and Asia. The success of cruising in other parts of the world this past year has led to more countries reopening their ports this month.

That success demonstrates the cruise lines' readiness and willingness to work with the CDC to resume responsibly in the United States. The progress we have seen recently indicates that it can be done, and we hope you too will continue to urge all parties to build constructively on that progress in favor of a solution that enables the cruise industry to resume sailing responsibly, and in a way that reflects the improving public health conditions.



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The Galveston Regional Chamber of Commerce looks forward to the full reopening of the travel and tourism economy throughout the country that will enable cruise visitors and others to visit. Thanks to the continued improvement of the pandemic conditions and effective deployment of vaccines, we are prepared to welcome visitors back very soon.

We join with the U.S Travel Association, the Texas Hotel Lodging Association, and other industry partners to urge the Biden Administration and CDC to continue to work with the cruise industry on a realistic and workable path forward to allow cruise lines to prepare for a gradual and phased resumption of cruising, and return of cruise tourism to Galveston, this summer.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gina M. Spagnola". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

Gina M. Spagnola
President & CEO