

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION®

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker:

Thank you for considering the “Omnibus Travel and Tourism Act of 2021” during today’s markup. The bill, which is crucial to the restoration of the travel and tourism industry, establishes permanent, high-level leadership in the federal government on travel issues, enhances travel facilitation and security, and ensures our nation has long-term strategies for travel’s economic recovery.

The pandemic decimated the travel industry, resulting in a loss of \$723 billion in travel spending and \$89 billion in federal, state and local tax revenue. While domestic leisure travel has largely recovered, the business and international inbound travel sectors continue to suffer devastating losses; these sectors are not expected to recover until at least 2024.

Proactive government planning will be necessary to shortening that timeline and restoring jobs more quickly. The bill establishes a much-needed Assistant Secretary for Travel and Tourism position to help lead the industry’s recovery and provide permanent federal leadership to increase global competitiveness. Prior to the pandemic, travel was a \$2.6 trillion industry that supported 16.7 million jobs and generated our nation’s largest service sector export. As the travel industry plays an outsized role in driving the overall U.S. economy, such a high-level position is vital to our country’s long-term recovery.

Another important aspect of this bill is how it enhances security facilitation. The bill would authorize the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) to conduct a pilot program in which a traveler and their carry-on baggage would not need to be re-screened upon arrival in the U.S. for their domestic connecting flight if the last point of departure airport has an equivalent level of screening to the U.S. This program would uphold the safety and security of the air travel system while providing air travelers with much-needed efficiencies and a more seamless travel experience.

Finally, the bill also directs the Secretary of Commerce to lead the development of an industrywide recovery strategy and set national visitation and spending goals for international inbound travel, which is crucial to sustaining an even recovery throughout all sectors of the industry.

U.S. Travel thanks Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, Chair Rosen and Ranking Member Scott for their leadership on this bill, as well as the bipartisan group of senators that helped craft the legislation. We urge this bill’s swift passage and stand ready to assist the committee in any way possible.

Thank you again for all that you do for our industry.

Sincerely,



Tori Emerson Barnes
Executive Vice President, Public Affairs and Policy
U.S. Travel Association

