



December 14, 2021

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
Chair
Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade,
and Export Promotion
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Scott
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade,
and Export Promotion
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Wicker, Chair Rosen, and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of America's hotel and lodging industry, thank you for your leadership on the bipartisan "Omnibus Travel and Tourism Act of 2021." As our nation continues to recover from the devastation caused by the global pandemic, this bill would provide critical support America's hoteliers, lodging workforce, and their communities, and pave the way towards a full recovery in the travel and tourism sector.

America's hotels are still struggling from the economic crisis caused by COVID-19. Hotels across the country were forced to reduce operations or shutter, leading to a loss of more than 700,000 jobs in 2020. Over 300,000 pre-pandemic hotel jobs have failed to return this year due to a lack of travel demand, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Hotel revenues were down nearly 50% in 2020 are projected to remain down 20% compared to 2019 in 2021 and will not return to pre-pandemic levels before 2023. The emergence of the Omicron variant adds significant variability to what was already a tentative recovery. These data acutely illustrate our industry's challenges with the uncertainty of international visitors, lack of business travel, and continued workforce concerns. The following provisions of "Tour Bus" legislation will provide significant infrastructure for the long-term development of our industry and we are hopeful Congress can come together to pass it quickly.

Visit America

The Visit America Act included in the Tour Bus is a crucial measure to promote America as a destination for international visitors. Visit America establishes national goals for the number of

international visitors and travel exports to accelerate economic development in the wake of the pandemic. International visitors are foundational to the travel industry. Unfortunately, measures necessary to prevent outbreaks and to avoid overwhelming health systems caused the near shutdown of all international travel to the United States. In 2020, international travel fell by 76%, resulting in the loss of \$60 billion dollars in economic output. These provisions will help reclaim economic losses and build a travel framework for the country.

Further, Visit America's establishment of a senior leadership position at the U.S. Department of Commerce charged with setting travel benchmarks sends an important message to the international community and to domestic businesses that America is eager to welcome guests and will open for business when travel fully resumes.

Additionally, we appreciate your recognition of the importance of tourism promotion abroad through Brand USA. Since 2013, Brand USA's marketing efforts have resulted in more than 7.7 million visitors to the United States who spent \$25 billion and created \$56 billion in total economic impact. The program is essential to ensuring American competitiveness for international travelers and we encourage continued bipartisan congressional support.

Study and Report on the Effects of COVID-19 on the Travel and Tourism Industry

Since the pandemic began, economists have projected a protracted recovery for the lodging sector. The Study and Report on the Effects of COVID-19 on the Travel and Tourism Industry in the United States will be vital to highlighting the trends and impacts of the health and economic distress caused by the crisis and will provide data-driven policy recommendations for promoting and assisting our industry's recovery.

Pilot Program for One-Stop Security

The Tour Bus also creates a pilot program for one-stop security screening for travelers departing from foreign airports whose destinations or connections are within the United States. The program establishes extensive security protocols and aims to save time and ensure a more pleasant travel experience for international guests and encourage return visits -- ultimately resulting in more heads in beds at American hotels.

America's travel and tourism industry remains resilient and will ultimately overcome these economic challenges. The Tour Bus legislation will accelerate the national economic recovery and develop enduring infrastructure to modernize and enhance our sector. We urge swift passage of this bill and look forward to working with you and your colleagues in implementing its solutions.

Sincerely,



Chip Rogers
President & CEO
American Hotel & Lodging Association