



American Society of
Travel Advisors

June 7, 2022

The Honorable Jacky Rosen
Chair
Subcommittee on Tourism,
Trade, and Export Promotion
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Rick Scott
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Tourism,
Trade, and Export Promotion
Senate Committee on Commerce,
Science and Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Rosen and Ranking Member Scott:

On behalf of the 17,000 members of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), I write to submit the following into the hearing record for the Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, and Export Promotion’s hearing on June 7, 2022, titled “Reviving Conventions & Tourism Through International Travel.”

As you examine the state of international travel to the United States, ASTA urges you to consider the impact of one pandemic-era rule continuing to affect the travel industry – the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) current order requiring proof of a negative coronavirus (COVID-19) test or documentation of having recovered from COVID-19 for all air passengers, including U.S. citizens, regardless of vaccination status, arriving from a foreign country (“inbound testing order”).¹ The inbound testing order does not apply to travelers arriving via ship or a border crossing from Canada or Mexico. By singling out air travelers, in its current form, this rule is preventing the full recovery of the travel and tourism industry while harming the competitive position of the U.S. relative to our largest trading partners.

For over two years, ASTA has been committed to working with federal, state and international governments, our members, and the broader travel ecosystem to restart travel in a way that puts the safety and health of U.S. citizens at its center. While we understand the rationale behind the inbound testing order when it was put into place in January 2021, it continues to present a number of practical challenges to our members and their clients, which all too often result in international travel plans being postponed indefinitely or canceled altogether. These challenges range from uncertainty as to the timely availability of overseas testing to the financial and psychological burdens associated with the prospect of being prevented from returning home due to a positive (or false positive) test result to a general chilling effect on international travel bookings. The November 2021 shortening of the testing window from 72 to 24 hours has only exacerbated these challenges. In fact, according to a recent survey of ASTA members, 83 percent of trip cancellations occurred due to the U.S. COVID-19 testing requirement, overwhelmingly the number one cause of cancellations according to travel advisors.

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022, January). [Requirement for Proof of Negative COVID-19 Test or Documentation of Recovery from COVID-19](#).

Therefore, one can reasonably conclude that the inbound testing order remains the single biggest barrier to the full recovery of the international travel system on which our members, and many of their clients, rely for their livelihoods.

According to the CDC, “the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19...is for individuals to get vaccinated...vaccinated individuals are 5 times less likely to be infected and 10 times less likely to experience hospitalization or death due to COVID-19 than unvaccinated individuals.”

As we reflect on how far the science related to COVID-19 mitigation has advanced since the order was first put in place, we respectfully request your continued support for exempting fully vaccinated travelers from the inbound testing order. Exempting the more than 221 million Americans who are fully vaccinated from the order would reflect the scientific consensus that widespread vaccination is the single most important element of the fight against COVID-19 while allowing the travel industry’s recovery to begin in earnest. It would also incentivize those who aren’t vaccinated to consider becoming so, restoring an incentive that existed for a mere 28 days between the effective dates of the Administration’s October 25 order and the December 2, 2021, update to it.²

Moreover, a growing number of countries, including the United States’ biggest trading partners and outbound travel markers, have recently moved in the direction of removing the pre-departure test requirement for the fully vaccinated, including the United Kingdom, the European Union, Canada and Australia. To be clear, we do not as a general matter believe that vaccination should be a prerequisite to international travel. That said, we do believe a balance needs to be struck in terms of protecting public health without crippling the free flow of commerce and individuals across international borders. Exempting fully vaccinated U.S. citizens from the order is a way to appropriately strike that balance consistent with the Administration’s stated desire for “an air travel policy that relies primarily on vaccination to advance the safe resumption of international air travel to the United States.”³

Thank you for considering ASTA’s views on this critical matter. If you or your staff has any questions about this or any issue related to the travel industry, don’t hesitate to contact me or Eben Peck, ASTA’s Executive Vice President of Advocacy, at (703) 739-6842 or epeck@asta.org.

Yours Sincerely,



Zane Kerby
President and Chief Executive Officer

² Effective November 8, 2021, unvaccinated U.S. citizens and permanent residents were to provide a negative test taken within one day of departure, while vaccinated travelers continued to require a negative test within 72 hours. In the wake of the omicron variant, effective December 6 that distinction was erased and all travelers were required to present a negative test within 24 hours.

³ The White House. (2021, October.) [A Proclamation on Advancing the Safe Resumption of Global Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)