October 22, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
Secretary
Department of Health & Human Services
200 Independence Ave., S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20201

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
Acting Secretary
U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Azar, Secretary Chao and Acting Secretary Wolf:

The undersigned aviation and business community stakeholders urge the Administration, its international partners, and state governors to pursue a risk-based and data-driven approach to COVID-19 testing which would obviate the need for quarantines and travel bans so that the travel network can be safely re-opened. Travel quarantines are decimating our industry. In a recent survey, 83% of travelers said they would not travel if there is a chance of being quarantined at their destination.

Travel, tourism and air cargo are critical components of the U.S. economy and are key to its recovery. In 2019, International Travel Imports totaled $196 billion, creating a $59 billion travel trade surplus. International travel spending directly supported about 1.2 million U.S. jobs and $33.6 billion in wages. Domestic travelers alone spent $972 billion. Accounting for 7% of total private industry employment in the U.S., domestic and international travel directly supported 9 million U.S. jobs in 2019. As demonstrated by the disappointing results of the summer travel season, the continued restrictions on international travel and differing state and international quarantine policies are hampering the recovery of the U.S. economy.

According to a recent survey of corporate travel buyers, conducted on August 5th and August 8th, by the Global Business Travel Association (GBTA), these uncertainties are having an even

bigger impact on international business travel. More than 9 in 10 companies (93%) worldwide have canceled or suspended most or all international trips, and three-quarters (74%) have canceled or suspended most or all domestic trips. Data from Airlines for America tells a similar story. International travel for the Summer of 2020 was down 91% from 2019, while domestic traffic fell 73% from the prior year.

In the United States, eighteen states have some type of quarantine. This patchwork of rules is confusing and discourages travel. Furthermore, there are alternatives to quarantines, such as testing and screening of passengers at or ahead of departure, that can significantly reduce the risk of importation of COVID-19 and may actually be more effective due to the difficulties in enforcing compliance with quarantine requirements. In fact, where infections levels are similar at the departure and destination locations, requiring just a single negative test ahead of departure would result in passengers being significantly less likely to transmit the virus than the destination population as a whole. Despite this, only a handful of states allow travelers with a negative test result to be exempted from quarantine, and most states do not.

So that an alternative to an automated quarantine can be agreed upon and implemented quickly, state governors and governments around the globe should work together to:

- Establish common criteria and thresholds for determining epidemiological risk on a detailed regional level.
- Implement common protocols upon departure to and return from high risk areas using the best scientific evidence to determine the best risk mitigation, not risk elimination, strategies.
- Eliminate the need for blanket restrictions and traveler quarantines by implementing comprehensive, cost-effective pre-departure testing procedures and contact tracing protocols.
  - These protocols must be medically based, affordable, dependable, scalable, privacy-oriented, and fit into the passenger journey with as little disruption as possible.

There is widespread agreement in the aviation and travel industries that appropriate COVID-19 pre-departure testing protocols can serve as an alternative to quarantines while increasing confidence in the health and safety of the air transportation system. Globally, an increasing number of governments are implementing pre-travel testing requirements that exclude aircraft crew from quarantine requirements. We ask the U.S. government, working with the aviation industry, to move forward expeditiously to establish similar protocols. More broadly, we ask that the federal government strongly encourage their counterparts around the world to both support the ICAO CART framework and work with industry to create a global framework for testing protocols and other health requirements.

Continued border restrictions and quarantine measures for the traveling public and/or our crewmembers are not the answer to combating the devasting effects of COVID-19 and are aiding in the demise of our industry when better alternatives exist. The industry and the governments need to unite around a common position to enable effective testing as the alternative to quarantine and set the example on how to safely jump start the aviation sector.

The multiple layers of protection already in place throughout the flying experience make flying itself safer than most other activities – such as the strict enforcement of the face coverings requirement by airlines, health acknowledgements during the check-in process, enhanced

airport and aircraft cleaning protocols, and the use of HEPA filters and air exchange onboard aircraft that remove virus particles from the air. The Department of Defense recently conducted testing and concluded[1] that the risk of on-board coronavirus transmission is low, particularly as a result of wearing face coverings along with the air replacement and filtration systems on aircraft. Results of scientific studies, like the DOD study, demonstrate that face coverings are a critical measure in stopping the transmission of COVID-19 on a plane. When taken in conjunction with the multi-layered measures, implementing pre-departure COVID-19 testing protocols would allow the safe reopening of travel markets and alleviate the huge pressures on the aviation industry.

After the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the aviation community and the government pulled together to meet major security challenges that profoundly affected our industry and the U.S. Like we did during 9/11, let's unify, again, to combat COVID-19 through pre-departure testing protocols, protect our employees, crew and travelers, and restore economic vitality to this important sector.

Aeronautical Repair Station Association
Aerospace Industries Association
Air Line Pilots Association
Airline Passenger Experience Association
Airlines for America
Airports Council International-North America
American Hotel & Lodging Association
American Society of Travel Advisors
Association of Flight Attendants
Cargo Airline Association
Global Business Travel Association
International Air Transport Association
National Air Carrier Association
Regional Airline Association
Regional Air Cargo Carrier Association
Radio Technical Commission for Aeronautics
Travel Technology Association
Travelers United
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Travel Association

cc: The Honorable Laura Kelly Governor of Kansas
        The Honorable Philip Murphy Governor of New Jersey
        The Honorable Michelle Grisham Governor of New Mexico
        The Honorable Andrew Cuomo Governor of New York
        The Honorable Mike DeWine Governor of Ohio
        The Honorable Philip Scott Governor of Vermont
        The Honorable Muriel Bowser Mayor of the District of Columbia

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[1] https://www.ustranscom.mil/cmd/docs/TRANSCOM%20Report%20Final.pdf