April 5, 2021

Director Rochelle Walensky
National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
Mailstop F-80
4770 Buford Highway, NE
Atlanta, GA, 30341-3717

Dear Director Walenksy:

Tourism is an integral part of the economy of fifteen (15) States, Puerto Rico and the United States Virgin Islands where it will act as a major element of our COVID-19 economic recovery. We are writing to you today to request updated guidance that will help cruise lines and ports fully resume operations and open up a dialogue about how we might all work collaboratively and with the relevant federal authorities and other Governors to make it possible for the cruise industry to generate tourism-related dollars in our respective jurisdictions. The tourism industry is an integral part of our economy and within the cruise industry plays a major role.

"The 2018 Economic Impact Analysis highlights the incredible impact the cruise industry continues to have on the global economy. In the United States, the cruise industry had an economic impact of over $52.7 billion in total contributions in 2018 and marked a notable increase of over 10% since 2016. Approximately 13 million cruise passengers worldwide embarked from ports in the United States in 2018, and they spent a record $23.96 billion in the United States, which marks a 33% increase since 2010. Additionally, 2018 saw a new peak in the cruise industry's U.S. expenditures, generating 421,711 jobs across the United States and contributing more than $23.15 billion in wages and salaries, a nearly 13% increase since 2016."

We know the cruise industry is poised to make a comeback. Given the central role of tourism to our local and regional economies, this would be a welcome development. This of course depends on when our ports and the cruise lines can and will be able to reopen and under what conditions.

Thanks to the hard work of our Governors' teams, we are receiving supplies to immunize all of our people. In the Virgin Islands, we anticipate that by July we should have reached a level of vaccination that would allow for cruise ship passengers to safely visit. We hope that Governors across the nation will soon achieve something comparable in their states. The cruise industry can be expected to impose its own requirements for passengers, with a view toward keeping them safe and protecting those with whom they may come into contact as they travel.

An entire year has passed since a cruise ship entered any of our ports. However, to restart the cruise industry safely and confidently, we would all benefit from guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). We anticipate that the US Department of Transportation and President Biden's COVID-19 task force will have an interest in restarting a key mode of transportation on which our tourism industry depends, subject to appropriate guidance from CDC.

We are hoping that you will be willing to work with the seventeen Governors impacted by the cruising industry to help get the guidance needed from the CDC and bring back the cruise ship industry in a manner that enables it to operate safely for our collective benefit.

Thank you in advance for your consideration of this request. We look forward to working with you to address this urgent public policy concern.

Yours sincerely,

Albert Bryan Jr.
Governor, U.S. Virgin Islands

Mike Dunleavy
Governor, Alaska

David Ige
Governor, Hawaii

John Bel Edwards
Governor, Louisiana

Larry Hogan
Governor, Maryland

Pedro Pierluisi
Governor, Puerto Rico

Ralph Northam
Governor, Virginia

cc: Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith
Chairwoman, COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force