GOVERNMENT HOUSE
UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
April 6, 2021
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Bipartisan Team of Governors Sign-on to Governor Bryan's Letter Asking CDC to Expedite Reopening of U.S. Cruise Ports

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS – A bipartisan team of governors from five states and Puerto Rico have signed-on to a letter that Governor Albert Bryan Jr. sent to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Rochelle Walensky and Dr. Marcella Nunez-Smith, the chairwoman of President Biden's COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force, asking the CDC to issue updated regulations to expedite the reopening of cruise ports in the United States.

The Governors who co-signed Governor Bryan's letter are Governor Pedro Pierluisi of Puerto Rico; Governor Ralph Northam of Virginia; Governor Larry Hogan of Maryland; Governor John Bel Edwards of Louisiana; Governor David Ige of Hawaii; and Governor Mike Dunleavy of Alaska.

Governor Bryan's letter asks Director Walensky to have the CDC issue updated guidance that will help cruise lines and ports fully resume operations and open up a dialogue about how the states, territories and federal government can work collaboratively to make it possible for the cruise industry to generate tourism-related dollars in the affected jurisdictions.

"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," Governor Bryan wrote. "This of course depends on when our ports and the cruise lines can and will be able to reopen and under what conditions."

In his letter, Governor Bryan cites the 2018 Economic Impact Analysis, which highlights the impact that 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, according to the Economic Impact Analysis.

In the letter, the Governor notes that by July the Virgin Islands expects to reach a level of vaccination that would allow for cruise ship passengers to safely visit and that 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,” Governor Bryan wrote in the letter. “We anticipate that the U.S. 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.”

The Bryan-Roach Administration is committed to transparency, stabilizing the economy, restoring trust in the government and ensuring the disaster recovery is completed as quickly as possible.

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