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Eastern Caribbean States Throw Support Behind Governor Bryan's Request to Florida Governor DeSantis

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — In a letter sent to Governor Albert Bryan Jr., Dominica Prime Minister Honorable Roosevelt Skerrit, in his role as Chairman of the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS), thanked the Governor for his proactive initiative in writing to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and asking Governor DeSantis to reconsider his ban on cruise ships embarking from Florida requiring proof of vaccination against COVID-19.

Prime Minister Skerrit sent the letter to Governor Bryan on behalf of Anguilla Premier Ellis Webster; Antigua and Barbuda Prime Minister Gaston Browne; BVI Premier Andrew Fahie; Grenada Prime Minister Keith Mitchell; Guadeloupe Regional Council President Ary Chalus; Martinique Executive Council President Alfred Marie-Jean; Montserrat Premier Joseph E. Farrell; St. Kitts and Nevis Prime Minister Timothy Harris; St. Lucia Prime Minister Allen Chastanet; St. Vincent and the Grenadines Prime Minister Ralph Gonsalves; and Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States Director General Didacus Jules.

“We are deeply concerned – as you are – with the grave inherent difficulties for our effort to safeguard lives and to reignite livelihoods as we are among the most tourism-dependent economies of the world,” Prime Minister Skerrit’s letter said. “While the new law is not specific to the cruise business, it will potentially have a huge deleterious effect on it because almost all cruise ships (especially to the Caribbean) originate from ports within the state of Florida.

Governor Bryan sent a letter last week to Governor Ron DeSantis asking him to reconsider legislation the Florida governor approved that bans cruise ships embarking from Florida ports from requesting proof of vaccination. Governor Bryan said such an action contradicts the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s guidelines and could endanger the population of the Caribbean islands visited by such ships and potentially heavily impact the limited healthcare resources in the region.

In his letter to Governor Bryan, Prime Minister Skerrit said the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States will advance those arguments in support of the advocacy that Governor Bryan already has undertaken and will urge their partners in the cruise and land-based tourism industries to add their voices in appeal to Governor DeSantis.

“For us as Small Island Developing States whose economies are largely fueled by tourism, the vaccination status of industry players (both visitors and industry workers – whether cruise or land-based) is essential to our

strategy in the OECS to safeguard the lives of both our people and visitors and restore our economies," the letter said.

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