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Governor Bryan Asks Florida Governor DeSantis to Reconsider Law Blocking Cruise Ships from Requiring Proof of Vaccination

Governor Bryan's Separate Letter to CARICOM Chairman Ralph Gonsalves Asks for Caribbean Region Support to Find Path to Restart Cruise Industry

U.S. VIRGIN ISLANDS — Governor Albert Bryan Jr.sent a letter on Monday to Florida Governor Ron DeSantis asking him to reconsider legislation that bans cruise ships embarking from Florida ports from requiring proof of vaccination, an action that Governor Bryan said contradicts the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's guidelines and would stifle the restart of the cruise industry.

Also on Monday, Governor Bryan sent a separate letter to CARICOM Chairman and Prime Minister of St. Vincent and the Grenadines Ralph Gonsalves asking for support from the Caribbean Region in finding the path forward to restarting the cruise industry in as safe a way as possible.

"I respect your commitment to health and civil liberties and write to ask you to reconsider the measure in the Florida legislation standing in the way of cruises sailing from the state with vaccine requirements," Governor Bryan wrote in his letter to Governor DeSantis. "Florida, the United States Virgin Islands and the Caribbean region—our lives are connected by a thousand invisible threads, and along these sympathetic fibers, our actions run as causes and return to us as results."

In his letter to Governor DeSantis, Governor Bryan also noted that Florida is the nucleus and biggest embarkation point for cruises in the United States and that Florida is home to the headquarters and key infrastructure of major cruise lines.

"If nothing else, grant an exemption to cruise lines that have destinations in the Caribbean. This will be a big win for the people of the Caribbean and the Caribbean expatriates that live in your state," Governor Bryan wrote. "It is my hope that you will reconsider and move in the same direction. I am committed to working with you to find an agreeable path forward."

In his letter to Chairman Gonsalves, Governor Bryan asked that CARICOM support his initiative to restart the cruise industry vital to island economies.

The Governor also noted that most of the Caribbean islands have had issues with ensuring that visitors are duly vaccinated for the COVID-19 virus because of difficulties obtaining the vaccine.

“St. Thomas, one of the most popular ports of call for cruises in the Caribbean, is in the direct line of fire, alongside the other port-of-call destinations,” Governor Bryan wrote regarding the Florida law banning proof of vaccination. “The COVID-19 pandemic has hammered the world. The cruise lines want to operate out of Florida, and they want to do so safely.”

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