

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

January 13, 2022

Ms. Kelly Craighead
President and Chief Executive Officer
Cruise Lines International Association
1201 F Street NW, Suite 250
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Ms. Craighead:

We write with extreme concern about the conditions on cruise ships amidst the rapid spread of the Omicron variant. Passengers on board ships with outbreaks say they have little accurate information about positive COVID-19 cases, and those who test positive report deplorable conditions. While ships continue sailing, cruise operators must take all actions necessary to prioritize the health and well-being of passengers and crew.

COVID-19 poses a unique risk on cruise ships. Despite efforts of cruise operators, one positive case can – and often does – quickly spread amongst passengers and crew. On December 30, 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledged this risk, updating the COVID-19 Travel Health Notice to its highest level for cruise ships and warning all passengers to “avoid cruise travel, regardless of vaccination status.”¹ Moreover, the CDC is investigating all cruise ships with passengers in U.S. waters for positive COVID-19 cases.² It is clear the COVID-19 protocols cruise operators have in place are not working.

Passengers also report that they do not think cruise operators properly informed them of COVID-19 risks or handled outbreaks of COVID-19 that did occur. Passengers booked trips expecting to be safe given cruise operators’ vaccination and testing requirements. Some even booked larger rooms under the impression they could quarantine in their room should they test positive for COVID-19.³ Other passengers who tested positive reported receiving moldy and lackluster food or waiting hours to receive bottles of water.⁴ In addition, cruise operators’ reportedly did not engage in contact tracing or regularly update passengers updates about

¹ “COVID-19 and Cruise Ship Travel,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices/covid-4/coronavirus-cruise-ship> (accessed January 11, 2022).

² “Cruise Ship Color Status,” *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/cruise/cruise-ship-color-status.html> (accessed January 11, 2022).

³ Ceylan Yeginsu, “Cases Rise, Criticism Mounts, but Ships Keep Cruising,” *New York Times* (New York, NY), January 6, 2022, <https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/06/travel/coronavirus-cruise-ships-omicron.html>.

⁴ Hannah Sampson and Meryl Kornfield, “Bare rooms, rotten fruit and boredom: Quarantine life on infected cruises,” *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), January 8, 2022, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2022/01/08/cruise-quarantine-omicron-covid-ship>.

positive COVID-19 cases on board.⁵ This is simply unacceptable. Passengers and crew on cruise ships need to be given full and transparent information about potential COVID-19 outbreaks occurring to make informed decisions about their health and safety.

We respectfully request written answers to the following questions about cruise lines' health and safety protocols by January 27, 2022:

1. Are passengers and crew required to be fully vaccinated?
2. What information about COVID-19 risk and response is conveyed with passengers in advance of their trip? While they are sailing? And upon conclusion of the trip?
3. Does the information shared with passengers include relevant CDC COVID-19-related guidance, such as the COVID-19 Travel Health Notice? Please explain why or why not.
4. Are passengers and crew required to test negative before beginning a trip? If so, how is the requirement enforced, and what happens if a passenger or crew member tests positive?
5. Please describe cruise lines' on board protocols to handle to COVID-19 cases, including—
 - a. response to a suspected or positive COVID-19 case among crew;
 - b. response to a suspected or positive COVID-19 case among passengers, including quarantine location and amenities and testing availability for the accompanying travel party;
 - c. notifications to passengers about suspected and confirmed COVID-19 cases among passengers and crew;
 - d. timelines for the notifications following case identification; and
 - e. contact tracing efforts.
6. Do cruise lines have mask mandates?
 - a. If so, please describe how they are enforced.
 - b. If not, please explain why not.
7. Are passengers and crew required to test negative before disembarking from a ship?
 - a. If so, how is the requirement enforced, and what happens if a passenger or crew member tests positive?
 - b. If not, please explain the steps cruise lines are taking to protect people from COVID-19 at ports of call.

⁵ Sampson and Kornfield, "Bare rooms;" Yeginsu, "Cases Rise."

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



DORIS MATSUI
Member of Congress