

**Congress of the United States**  
Washington, DC 20515

April 14, 2021

Dr. Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention  
1600 Clifton Road - Mailstop E-92  
Atlanta, GA 30329-4027

Dear Director Walensky:

We write today with significant concern about the prospect of premature resumption of cruise ship operations that could threaten public safety and increase the spread of the coronavirus. While the United States is making significant progress in distributing COVID-19 vaccines, introduction and spread of COVID-19 by cruise ship crew and passengers could undermine this progress and require additional mitigation measures that delay our economic recovery and put public health at severe risk. We urge you to strictly enforce the technical guidance issued under the Framework for Conditional Sailing Order (CSO) to minimize this threat, and take all appropriate steps—including halting cruises as necessary—if outbreaks occur on board.

In its March 14, 2020, No-Sail Order, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) acknowledged the “increased risk of transmission on cruise ships” noting that outbreaks on cruise ships had “resulted in countless hours of work for numerous already-burdened public health officials.” Given the potential for a large, virus spreading event on a cruise ship, the CDC appropriately issued this No-Sail Order to suspend cruise ship operations. On April 2, 2021, the CDC issued the first phase of technical guidance under the CSO, which was implemented on October 31, 2020 by the previous administration. This guidance outlines procedures and protocols that will allow resumption of cruise ship travel when it is safe to do so. Failing to adhere to this guidance could create unsafe conditions that jeopardize public health. Therefore, we believe it is a public health imperative that the CDC rigorously enforce the technical guidance under the CSO and take all necessary measures, including stopping cruise line operations as needed, if COVID-19 outbreaks happen aboard ships.

While the United States makes progress toward our shared goal of beating this pandemic, COVID-19 remains a grave public health risk that requires ongoing vigilance. Prematurely lifting restrictions on cruising – with thousands of people in close proximity and conditions ripe for spread of infections – threatens a serious setback in this progress. It is absolutely critical that

we listen to scientists and health and safety experts over the industry and its profit-driven executives.

Thank you for your attention to this important public health matter.

Sincerely,



Doris Matsui  
Member of Congress



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate