



Federal Maritime Commission
Washington, D.C. 20573

Office of the Commissioner

May 18, 2021

The President
The White House
Washington, District of Columbia 20500

Dear President Biden:

I write this to request your assistance in restarting an economic engine that supports thousands of U.S. workers through the release and distribution of surplus COVID-19 vaccinations to maritime workers and port communities throughout the Caribbean and Central America.

Last year at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Federal Maritime Commission appointed me Fact Finding Officer to determine the economic impact of the cessation of cruise activity on our Nation's ports and port communities. As you are no doubt aware, in March of 2020, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued a No Sail Order suspending cruise activity into and out of United States ports. While there were limited exceptions for small passenger vessels, the Order essentially curtailed all cruise activity resulting in a significant loss to the national economy.

Nevertheless, the Administration gave hope to thousands when the CDC issued guidelines earlier this month to begin the resumption of cruise activity pursuant to an earlier issued conditional sail order. We are all aware that the cruise industry is not just a collection of corporate giants, but rather an enterprise that directly impacts the lives of thousands of members of organized labor, farmers, farm workers, small business owners and their employees. But the impact of the cruise industry does not stop at the American port. Cruise ships out of U.S. ports sailing to neighboring foreign destinations generate the need for American goods at these various foreign ports of call. More importantly, American tourism provides essential capital to our Caribbean and Central American neighbors helping to facilitate their economic and social stability. Over the last year this income stream has dried up due to safety concerns and a loss of passenger confidence. However, with the advent of the various vaccines, we see the possibility of reigniting that economic engine that is the cruise industry and once again inspiring passenger confidence in the safety of the cruise sector. As more and more people in the U.S. are vaccinated and laboratories increase production, we are beginning to see the possibility of our nation being in that enviable position of having a surplus of the lifesaving serums.

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This is where your assistance is vitally needed. Current CDC guidelines for conditional sailing of cruise vessels establish criteria for crew and passenger vaccination levels as well as protocols for shipboard activity and off ship excursions. In order to expedite the comfort of regulators and potential passengers, it is clear that ports of call should be made as reasonably safe as possible. Ports of call in the hemisphere have a direct connection to the safety of our own ports and our people. To that end, I encourage you to consider making available surplus vaccines to our Caribbean and Central American neighbors with particular emphasis on U.S. cruise ports of call and the Panama Canal. By assisting our neighbors battle this pandemic, we not only help them but ourselves as we reduce an ocean borne vector of transmission, expedite the full recovery of a vital income generator, and help ensure the stability of our hemisphere.

Thank you for your time and consideration of this important issue.

Respectfully,

Louis E. Sola
Commissioner

CC: Jeffrey Zients, Counselor to the President