



American Society of
Travel Advisors

October 14, 2020

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of the State of New York
NYS State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Cuomo:

I write on behalf of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) and the more than 12,000 New Yorkers who work at travel agencies across the state to express our grave concerns about the impact of your most recent travel quarantine executive order (No. 205.1) on our members' businesses and to urge you to explore alternatives to an automatic two-week quarantine for virtually all New Yorkers returning to the state from abroad.

In normal times, travel agencies – online, “brick and mortar” and many hybrid business models in between – play a critical role in the U.S. travel and tourism industry. In 2019, travel agencies sold the majority of airline tickets in the U.S. – close to 830,000 air tickets *per day* in 2019 – two-thirds of cruises and 68 percent of tour packages. According to the latest data from the U.S. Census Bureau, there are almost 8,700 New Yorkers working at 1,825 retail locations plus an estimated 3,500 self-employed travel advisors in the state. The vast majority of these businesses (98 percent) are small according to the U.S. Small Business Administration's size standards, and over two-thirds of them are owned and operated by women.

Due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, starting in March this business – and any revenue associated with it – has come to an almost complete halt. As a result, according to our member surveys, more than 9 in 10 travel agencies' business income is down at least 75 percent as compared to 2019. Further, even factoring in the relief programs created by the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act (P.L. 116-136), close to 64 percent of travel agencies surveyed have laid off at least half their staff. All told, 73 percent of ASTA members predict they will be out of business in six months or less if current conditions hold and additional financial relief is not provided. This scenario, which we view as unacceptable, would leave the traveling public without access to the critical services travel advisors provide consumers and cripple travel suppliers' main distribution channel.

Government action – here and abroad – has played a key role in this decimation of the travel agency business and while public health is paramount for our members, governments must not ignore the catastrophic economic consequences of the steps they've taken in response to COVID-19. The many government restrictions travel advisors have had to contend with while struggling to keep their businesses alive since March include the European Union's ban on inbound American travelers, the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) “No Sail Order” effectively halting cruise ship travel through at least October 31, 2020, U.S. State Department and CDC's recently-lifted guidance against international travel of any kind and ever-changing state-by-state quarantine

675 N Washington St, Ste 490
Alexandria, VA 22314

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requirements for domestic and international travelers.

On top of this, our 544 New York member companies are now faced with Executive Order No. 205.1, which requires a mandatory, two-week quarantine for anyone arriving in New York (including state residents) from all but 31 countries, few of which are destinations visited by U.S. travelers in large numbers.¹ In effect, this would mean that New Yorkers returning from a sorely-needed vacation to Mexico, Jamaica, the Dominican Republic or other destinations accepting U.S. travelers (with some restrictions in most cases) would need to observe a strict two-week quarantine upon arrival, regardless of their COVID infection status. This transforms a hypothetical weeklong vacation into a three-week ordeal, and serves as a strong disincentive for New Yorkers to undertake any international travel – at the worst possible time for our members’ businesses.

As such, we respectfully request that the State of New York explore alternatives to an automatic two-week quarantine for virtually all residents returning to the state from abroad. These could include, among other things, exempting those who test negative from the quarantine requirement, as several other states have done, including Connecticut, Hawaii and Massachusetts.² This negative test could be required before arrival (as Hawaii and Massachusetts do) or either before or after arrival (Connecticut). While shortages in the availability of rapid testing could present a challenge to this approach, it is far preferable to a mandatory, across-the-board and difficult to enforce two-week quarantine.

Thank you, on behalf of our 15,000-strong membership, for considering ASTA’s views on this critical issue. We are committed to working toward a travel industry restart with federal, state and international governments, our members, and the broader travel ecosystem in a way that puts the safety and health of U.S. citizens at its center – and look forward to working with you and the State of New York to make that happen.

If you or your staff has any questions about this issue or any related to the travel industry, don’t hesitate to contact me or Eben Peck, ASTA’s Executive Vice President of Advocacy, at (703) 739-6842 or epeck@asta.org.

Yours Sincerely,



Zane Kerby
President & Chief Executive Officer

CC: The Honorable Howard A. Zucker, M.D., J.D., Commissioner of Health for New York State

¹ Exec. Order No. 205.1: “[Quarantine Restrictions on Travelers Arriving in New York](#)” (Sept. 28, 2020).

² See “[Coronavirus \(COVID-19\) Transportation Related Information and Resources](#),” Hawaii Department of Transportation; Exec. Order No. 9C: “[Revisions to Self-Quarantine for Certain Travelers](#)” (Sept. 16, 2020); and “[COVID-19 Travel Order: International Travel](#),” Massachusetts Department of Public Health.