



American Society of
Travel Advisors

April 13, 2022

Dr. Ashish Jha
COVID-19 Response Coordinator
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Dr. Jha:

On behalf of the 17,000 members of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), and the more than 160,000 Americans who work at travel agencies across the country, congratulations on your recent appointment as President Biden's COVID-19 Response Coordinator.

As you assume leadership of our nation's pandemic response, we respectfully request that changes to one pandemic-era rule impacting the travel industry be given consideration at the earliest opportunity – the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) current order requiring proof of a negative coronavirus (COVID-19) test or documentation of having recovered from COVID-19 for all air passengers, including U.S. citizens, arriving from a foreign country ("inbound testing order").¹ In its current form, this rule is preventing the full recovery of the travel and tourism industry while harming the competitive position of the U.S. relative to our largest trading partners.

For over two years, ASTA has been committed to working with federal, state and international governments, our members, and the broader travel ecosystem to restart travel in a way that puts the safety and health of U.S. citizens at its center. That said, while we understand the rationale behind the inbound testing order when it was put into place in January 2021, it continues to present a number of practical challenges to our members and their clients, which all too often result in international travel plans being postponed or canceled altogether. These challenges range from uncertainty as to the timely availability of overseas testing to the financial and psychological burdens associated with being prevented from returning home due to a positive (or false positive) test result to a general chilling effect on international travel bookings. The November 2021 shortening of the testing window from 72 to 24 hours has only exacerbated these challenges.

In our view, the inbound testing order remains the single biggest barrier to the full recovery of the international travel system on which so many of our members, and their clients, rely for their livelihoods. As we reflect on how far the science related to COVID-19 mitigation has advanced

¹ U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2022, January). [Requirement for Proof of Negative COVID-19 Test or Documentation of Recovery from COVID-19](#).

since the order was first put in place, we respectfully request that fully vaccinated U.S. citizens be exempted from the order.

According to the CDC, “the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19...is for individuals to get vaccinated...vaccinated individuals are 5 times less likely to be infected and 10 times less likely to experience hospitalization or death due to COVID-19 than unvaccinated individuals.”

Exempting the more than 218 million Americans who are fully vaccinated from the order would reflect the scientific consensus that widespread vaccination is the single most important element of the fight against COVID-19 while allowing the travel industry’s recovery to begin in earnest. It would also incentivize those who aren’t vaccinated to consider becoming so, restoring an incentive that existed for a mere 28 days between the effective dates of the Administration’s October 25 and December 2, 2021 updates to the order.²

Moreover, a growing number of countries, including the U.S.’ biggest trading partners and outbound travel markets, have recently moved in the direction of removing the pre-departure test requirement for the fully vaccinated, including the United Kingdom (U.K.), the European Union, Canada and Australia.

To be clear, we do not as a general matter believe that vaccination should be a prerequisite to international travel. That said, we do believe a balance needs to be struck in terms of protecting public health without crippling the free flow of commerce and individuals across international borders. Exempting fully vaccinated U.S. citizens from the order is a way to appropriately strike that balance consistent with the Administration’s stated desire for “an air travel policy that relies primarily on vaccination to advance the safe resumption of international air travel to the United States.”³

Thank you for considering ASTA’s views on this critical matter. If you or your staff has any questions about this or any issue 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 and Chief Executive Officer

² Effective November 8, 2021, unvaccinated U.S. citizens and permanent residents were to provide a negative test taken within one day of departure, while vaccinated travelers continued to require a negative test within 72 hours. In the wake of the omicron variant, effective December 6 that distinction was erased and all travelers were required to present a negative test within 24 hours.

³ The White House. (2021, October.) [A Proclamation on Advancing the Safe Resumption of Global Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic](#).