



September 9, 2020

The Honorable Alex M. Azar II
 Secretary of Health & Human Services
 Department of Health & Human Services
 200 Independence Ave., S.W.
 Washington, DC 20201

The Honorable Chad F. Wolf
 Acting U.S. Secretary of Homeland Security
 Department of Homeland Security
 Washington, DC 20528

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
 Secretary
 U.S. Department of Transportation
 1200 New Jersey Ave., S.E.
 Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Azar, Secretary Chao and Acting Secretary Wolf:

As aviation community stakeholders we are writing to urge the Administration to take steps needed to safely open international travel markets. Our top priority is the health and safety of the traveling public and aviation employees while also resuming regular operations as safely and quickly as possible. The economic toll this pandemic has taken on the U.S. economy is staggering. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council, the United States is set to lose \$155 billion from the economy due to the collapse of international travel. A strong and stable aviation industry is a key building block for a global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. The economic contribution of international travel and tourism cannot be overstated. In 2019, International Travel Imports totaled \$196 billion, creating a \$59 billion travel trade surplus. Importantly, international travel spending directly supported about 1.2 million U.S. jobs and \$33.6 billion in wages.

Coordinated and deliberate action must be taken to safely reopen the international travel market. These markets must be reopened to unite loved ones with their families, reinvigorate business travel including allowing U.S. citizens access to travel to key economic partners, and spur the travel and tourism market that so many communities in the U.S. depend on. A collaborative approach between governments and industry will help to ensure the development of standardized measures that promote needed consistency across the aviation system.

There is widespread agreement in the aviation and travel industries that appropriate COVID-19 testing protocols can enable the reopening of international travel markets while increasing confidence in the health and safety of the air transportation system. Globally, an increasing number of governments are implementing pre-travel testing requirements or post-arrival testing regimes. We ask the U.S. government, working with the aviation industry, to move forward expeditiously to establish similar protocols.

We are cognizant of the many complexities and issues surrounding COVID-19 testing. It is precisely because of these complexities that we call on the U.S. government to work on a bilateral and multilateral basis to establish a globally accepted framework for testing protocols for international travel. A critical step in this process is to begin a limited testing pilot project between the U.S. and either Europe, Canada, or the Pacific, that would provide a basis for evaluating the protocols and efficacy of such a program. There are several airports and airlines working on potential travel "bubbles" or "airbridge" concepts today. We ask the U.S. government to partner with industry to pilot these collaborative models, identify successful protocols, and chart a path forward.

When developing testing protocol pilots, the cost, speed to receive results, validity period of test results, risk tolerance thresholds, and accuracy of the tests should be evaluated. Testing protocols must be medically-based, affordable, dependable, privacy-oriented, and fit into the airline/airport operations with as little disruption as possible. Towards that end, the aviation community recommends the U.S. government design, develop, fund, and implement testing pilots that address key considerations, including: the availability and reliability of rapid diagnostic tests that can be conducted within a reasonable time window prior to departure; engagement with key international partners to ensure U.S. tests would be accepted; and assurance of privacy protections and traveler-control of sensitive health information.

We believe the recommended COVID-19 mitigation measures in the U.S. government's Runway to Recovery framework can serve as the basis for opening of testing protocol discussions with other governments. The combination of pre-departure COVID-19 testing protocols and the multiple layers of protection airlines, airports, the federal government, and our partners throughout the travel journey have embraced can help safely open international travel markets make flying safer than most other activities.

The aviation community stands ready to work with the U.S. government on the implementation of testing pilot protocols so that we can restore the economic vitality of the air transportation system by making it operational.

Aeronautical Repair Station Association
Aerospace Industries Association
Air Traffic Control Association
Airlines for America
Airport Council International – North America
American Association of Airport Executives

American Society of Travel Advisors
Cargo Airlines Association
General Aviation Manufacturers Association
Global Business Travel Association
International Air Transport Association
National Air Carrier Association
Radio Technical Commission for Aeronautics
Regional Air Cargo Carriers Association
Regional Airline Association
Travel Technology Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Travel Association