

July 29, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary, U.S. Department of State
Harry S. Truman Building, Room 7226
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We commend your leadership to strengthen our nation's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and to safely rebuild our economy as soon as possible. Enabling the safe and full resumption of international travel will play a critical role in these efforts—with the potential to restore more than \$150 billion in lost annual travel exports and 1.1 million travel-supported jobs. However, international travel cannot fully recover until visa processing resumes at full capacity. We respectfully urge your administration to take immediate action to safely restart routine visa processing.

We applaud your administration for establishing expert working groups to plan for a safe reopening of international travel from Canada, Mexico, the European Union, and the United Kingdom (U.K.). However, visa issuance from these countries combined to just 25% of total visas issued in 2019, leaving 75% of visa seekers outside the scope of these working groups.^{1,2} Moreover, of the 124 million overseas visitors who came to the U.S. for business or leisure in 2019, nearly 60% traveled to the U.S. with a temporary visa.³ For potential visitors from countries outside the scope of these working groups, the barriers to obtaining a visa are significant and serve as a de facto border closure to much of the globe.

As of July 15, just 81 of 237 visa processing sites were fully operational, 104 consulates were completely closed, and 156 (66%) consulates were either partially or completely closed to routine visa processing. For visa processing sites that are open, average processing wait-times for have skyrocketed from more than three months (95 days) in April to more than five months (164 days) in July. The backlog of immigrant visa applications for those who the State department reported are documentarily qualified has risen from 60,866 at the beginning of 2020 to 566,384 in July 2021.

Until visa process is fully restored, consulate closures and excessive visa interview wait-times will serve as a drag on our nation's economic recovery and global competitiveness. If international travel remains stagnant, whether due to border closures, other restrictions, or lack of visas, the U.S. can be expected to lose an additional \$90 billion in export income in the second half of the year—for a total loss of \$175 billion in 2021 alone—and more than 1 million American jobs will not be restored. We strongly support remaining vigilant in the fight against COVID-19. As vaccination rates increase and infection rates decrease, we urge your administration to take the following science-based and data-driven steps to resume routine visa processing:

- **Develop a Plan to Restore Routine Operations at U.S. Embassies and Consulates.** While on-the-ground conditions of the pandemic vary for each visa processing location, developing a risk-based plan on how and when to resume routine operations will ensure all U.S. Embassies and Consulates are reopened in a clear, consistent, and predictable manner.

- **Take Steps to Streamline and Modernize Visa Adjudication.** The State Department is already waiving in-person interviews for certain visa classes and applications. These waivers should be temporarily expanded to additional low-risk visa renewals to support visitation. The State Department should also begin using video conferencing technology to satisfy interview requirements, which will help keep consular officers safe, increase processing capacity in high demand locations, and reduce the backlog of applications across all visa classes.
- **Ensure Priorities for Visa Processing Support U.S. Economic Recovery Efforts.** America's travel industry was the hardest hit sector of the economy due to COVID-19—accounting for 35% of all jobs lost during 2020. Restoring travel jobs and spending to pre-pandemic levels cannot happen until international inbound travel fully resumes, which economists predict could take four years or more. To help accelerate economic recovery in America's travel industry, the State Department should prioritize visa processing for visas in high demand regions and for large international group tours. This can help reduce future visa processing backlogs and spur increased demand for international travel to the U.S., as your administration works to ease country-specific entry restrictions.

As your Administration continues to take bold action to help the country recover, we encourage you take these additional steps to ensure the U.S. can again be a welcoming beacon to all travelers. We look forward to working with you on these efforts, and we remain hopeful that all pandemic-related travel restrictions can soon be lifted to jumpstart our nation's economic recovery, restore jobs and reconnect the United States to the world.

Thank you,

ASSOCIATIONS

U.S. Travel Association	Asian American Hotel Owners Association	H-2B Workforce Coalition
American Gaming Association (AGA)	Boise Metro Chamber	Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce & VCB
American Hotel & Lodging Association	California Travel Association	HospitalityMaine
American Resort Development Association	Cruise Lines International Association	IAAPA
Association for Materials Protection and Performance	Florida Restaurant and Lodging Association	Illinois Hotel & Lodging Association
Arkansas Hospitality Association	Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau	International Association of Exhibitions and Events

International Inbound Travel Association	Oklahoma Hotel & Lodging Association	Tourism Industry Coalition of Michigan
Kentucky Travel Industry Association	Oregon Restaurant & Lodging Association	TravelBeat Ltd
Louisiana Association of Convention and Visitors Bureau	PROFESSIONAL CONVENTION MGMT	U.S. Chamber of Commerce
Louisiana Travel Association	San Francisco Travel Association	United States Tour Operators Association
Meeting Professionals International	San Mateo County/Silicon Valley CVB	Visit Annapolis & Anne Arundel County
Michigan Association of CVBs	Society of Independent Show Organizers (SISO)	Visit Austin
National Golf Course Owners Association	Southeast Tourism Society	Worldwide ERC®
National Park Hospitality Association	Student and Youth Travel Association	WYSE Travel Confederation
National Tour Association	Tahoe Donner Association	1900 of Ocean City Corporation
Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp	Texas Travel Alliance	
New Jersey Hotel and Lodging Association	The Pool and Hot Tub Alliance (PHTA)	
Ohio Hotel & Lodging Association		

COMPANIES/ORGANIZATIONS

A.R.M. (USA) Inc.	American Executive International Corp.	Associated Luxury Hotels International
Agencia Rispoli & compañía sa AIFS	AmericInn By Wyndham Tofte	Atenea Programas de Intercambio
Alliance Group Travel	Andean Tours	Atlantic Link
American Camp Association Upstate NY	Aramark - Leisure	ATP (AlliedTPro)
American Cultural Experiences (ACE Peru)	Arizona Office of Tourism	Atrium Hospitality

Attitash Mountain Service Co., LLC	Camp America / AIFS	Depot Market
Au Pair in America	Cape May Riggins	Destination Analysts
Au Pair Kids Huancayo E.I.R.L	Capitol Reef Resort	Destination DC
B.V.HOSPITALITY, INC	Caribou Highlands Lodge	Destination Irvine
Banks Wines & Spirits	Catalina Island Tourism Authority	Destination Michigan
Beach Mart Inc.	Catch Des Moines	Destination Niagara USA
Beach Rider Amusements	Cedar Point Amusement Park	Detroit Metro Convention & Visitors Bureau
Best Western Chincoteague Island	cenet (Cultural Exchange Network)	Devon Yacht Club, Inc.
Best Western Pony Soldier Inn	Centerplate @ Smugglers' Notch Resort	Diamond Resorts
B-FOR International	Central Amusement International Inc.	Discover New England
Big Cedar Lodge	CheeseHaven Corp	Discover Puerto Rico
Big Rivers Waterpark & Adventures	Chicago's First Lady	Dorney Park & Wildwater Kingdom
Bindlestiff Tours	CityPASS	Dutchess Tourism, Inc.
Bloomington MN CVB	Civitas	EAGLERIDER
Boardwalk Restaurant	Coastal Hotel	Element Bozeman
Brighton Suites Hotel	Cottonwood Restaurant & Bar	Emirates Airline
Broadway Inbound	Council on International Educational Exchange (CIEE)	Enchanted Forest Water Safari
Butler County Visitors Bureau	Cultural Homestay International (CHI)	Encore
Byers & Sons Long Island Bakehouse	Dairy Queen	Enterprise Holdings Inc
Caesars Entertainment	Deer Valley Resort	Experience Columbus
Camden Windward House	Denver International Airport	Experience Florida's Sports Coast
Camelback Hotel Corp		Experience Grand Rapids

Experience Kissimmee	Go City	Hershey Entertainment & Resorts
Experience Scottsdale	Go Lake Havasu	Hilton, Anchorage
Explore Branson	Grand Hotel, Mackinac Island, MI	Hilton Hotels of San Francisco Union Square
Explore Charleston	Grand View Resort, Inc	Hilton, San Francisco Union Square
Explore St. Louis	Gray Line Orlando	Historic Hotel Macomber
Extranomical Tours, LLC	Great Rivers & Routes Tourism Bureau	Holland America Princess-Alaska
F & E Hospitality	Greater Green Bay Convention & Visitors Bureau	Holland Area Convention & Visitors Bureau
FACE AMUSEMENT	Greater Miami Convention & Visitors Bureau	Hoss's Country Corner, Inc
Fair Hills Resort	Greater Newark Convention Visitors Bureau	Hostelling International USA
Fargo-Moorhead CVB	Greater Orlando Aviation Authority	Houston First Corporation
Fireside Inn & Suites	Greater Raleigh Convention & Visitors Bureau	Huntsville/Madison County Convention & Visitors Bureau
Four Queens Hotel and Casino	Greene County Ohio Convention & Visitors Bureau	IB Parks & Entertainment
Full of Dreams Group Tours LLC	Greenhaus	Inn by the Sea
Fun City	Greenheart International	INTEJ
Gardiner Gifts, LLC	Greenwood Convention and Visitors Bureau	INTER ADVENTURES PERU
Glacier Country Tourism	Gulf Shores & Orange Beach Tourism	InterExchange Inc
Glacier Park Collection by Pursuit	Hampton Inn & Suites Syracuse-North	Interlatina Cultural Exchange
Glenwood Caverns Adventure Park	Hampton Jitney, Inc.	INTERNATIONAL AMUSEMENTS, INC.
Global Educational Concepts		International Student Exchange
Global Friends, inc		INTRAX Inc.
Global Horizons USA LLC		
Global Secutive LLC		

IRNA Inc.	Little Ben 5 & 10, Inc / Ben Franklin	Natural Bridge Caverns
Irving Convention and Visitors Bureau	Longwoods International	New Orleans & Company
Jack Rouse Associates, Inc.	Loon Mountain Resort	New York Hilton Midtown
Jackson Hole Chamber of Commerce - Wyoming	Los Angeles Tourism & Convention Board	Nickelodeon Universe - Minneapolis MN
Jackson Hole Mountain Resort	LRCVB	Nikko Hotels International
Jenkinson's South Inc.	Lucio	North Dakota Department of Commerce - Tourism and Marketing Division
Jersey Girl Kitchen	LVCVA	Northern Hospitality Group
JJ Hapgood General Store & Eatery	Mackinac Island Tourism	OExplora
JTAMM Corp d/b/a The Talkative Pig	Mainsail Motel and Cottages	Omni Hotels & Resorts
JUPITER LEGEND CORPORATION	Mardells Gifts & Jewelry	Orange Blossom Bakery & Cafe Inc.
KARO LLC d/b/a Harbor Light Inn	Marshall Hotels & Resorts	OTS Globe - Americas
La Mer Beachfront Resort	Maureen's Ice Cream & Desserts	Outrigger Beach Resort
Lafayette Hotels	Mews Restaurant & Cafe	Pan American Hotel
Landry's	Migis Lodge	Parkside Inn Bridgeview
Las Vegas Sands	Moose Creek Inn	Persephone Bakery
LaZer Runner Inc.	Morey Resorts	Philadelphia Convention & Visitors Bureau
Ledo pizza	Morey's Piers	PICE
LEGOLAND Discovery Center Boston	Mountain View Grand Resort and Spa	Pigeon Forge Department of Tourism
Lithuanian World Center for Work Experience and Studies Abroad	Myrtle Beach Area Chamber and CVB	Piping Rock Club
	Naples, Marco Island, Everglades Convention & Visitors Bureau	Plan B Restaurant Holdings
	National Aquarium	Plaza Hotel & Casino

Port of Portland	Savara Hospitality	Squaw Valley / Alpine Meadows
Port Royal Hotel	Sawgrass Recreation Park	Staffords Hospitality
Protective Enclosures Company	SCPRT	Stage Coach Inn
Provisions Nantucket Inc.	SCUSA Inc.	Stage Global
Quality Donuts Inc.	Seafood & Spaghetti Works	Stanton Arts LLC
Quality Inn - Belgrade	Seafood Sam's Falmouth inc	Steuben County Conference & Visitors Bureau
R.W. Pizza L.L.C.	Seafood world	Stoweflake Mountain Resort and Spa
Real Florida Adventures	Seapointe Village Realty	STR
Renaissance Entertainment, LLC	Seaview Campground & Cottages	Students Partners SAC Peru
Ridin-Hy Ranch	Shalom's Gift Shop	Sun Coast Tour & Travel, Inc
Rispoli viajes	Shreveport-Bossier Convention & Tourist Bureau	SUN ISLANDS HAWAII, INC.
RMP Travel Inc	Silver Gate Partners	SunCoastUSA Tour Operator
Rocky Mountain International	Simpleview, Inc.	SW MI Tourist Council
Roseville Visitors Association	Sitka Tribe of Alaska	Swan Mountain Outfitters
RTT Services LLC	Six Flags America LP	Sweetwater Pools, Inc.
Ruby's Inn Inc.	Six Flags Darien Lake	Tarsus
RuTrex Puerto Rico	Six Flags Entertainment	TCB Productions LLC
Ryan Family Amusements	Six Flags Over Texas	Tempe Tourism Office
San Angelo Convention & Visitors Bureau	South Coast Plaza	The Bayfield Inn
San Diego Tourism Authority	South Dakota Department of Tourism	The Boardwalk Family of Restaurants
Santa Monica Travel and Tourism	Spirit Cultural Exchange	The Clam Shack
Sault Convention & Visitors Bureau	Springfield Convention & Visitors Bureau	The Edison Institute d/b/a The Henry Ford

The Fullington Auto Bus Company	US Cultural & Heritage Marketing Council	Visit Mississippi Visit Montgomery
The Greater Wildwoods Tourism Authority	USE - Universal Student Exchange	Visit North Carolina Visit Orlando
The Happy Valley Adventure Bureau	Vacasa Virginia Tourism Corp	VISIT PHILADELPHIA
The Oasis at Death Valley/ Xanterra	Visit Albuquerque	Visit Phoenix Visit San Antonio
The Richard Nixon Foundation	Visit Anaheim	Visit Santa Barbara
The Shubert Organization	Visit Aurora	Visit Seattle
TKo Hospitality Management	Visit Baltimore	Visit St. Pete/Clearwater
Top Dog Cafe	Visit Buffalo Niagara	Visit Stillwater OK, Inc.
Tour America LLC	Visit Charlevoix	Visit Tampa Bay
TPEG OSU	Visit Colorado Springs	Visit Tri-Valley
TradeWinds Island Resorts	VISIT DENVER	Visit Truckee-Tahoe
Travalco	Visit Duluth	Visit Vallejo
TravDek	Visit Fairfax	Visit Virginia's Blue Ridge
Travel Advocates International	Visit Fort Worth	Visit Wichita
Travel Michigan	Visit Greater Palm Springs	Visit Williamsburg
Travel Oregon	Visit Huntington Beach	Visit Yosemite Madera County
Travel Portland	Visit Jackson	Visit Cape Girardeau Convention & Visitors Bureau
Travel South USA	Visit Lafayette-West Lafayette	VisitDallas
Under The Radar Productions Inc.	Visit Lake Charles Visit Mesa	VisitLEX
UNE WORK AND TRAVEL PERU S.A.C.	VISIT Milwaukee	VisitNorfolk

Visto para Turismo	Whitefish Mountain Resort Wilderness at the Smokies	Wyndham Hotels & Resorts
Voss' Birchwood Lodge	Wilderness Territory	Xanterra Travel Collection
Water Safety Products	Winkler Pool Management Inc.	Xpressposts Marketing
West Chatham Grill LLC	Winslow's Tavern	YMCA Blue Ridge Assembly
West Hollywood Travel and Tourism Bureau	Work and Hols	Yosemite Mariposa County Tourism Bureau
WETAG - Work and Travel agency	World Wide Cultural Exchange	
	Worlds of Fun, a Cedar Fair Company	

CC: Brian Deese, Assistant to the President for Economic Policy and Director of the National Economic Council; Jacob Sullivan, National Security Advisor, National Security Council.

1. <https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Statistics/AnnualReports/FY2019AnnualReport/FY19AnnualReport-%20TableI.pdf>
2. <https://travel.state.gov/content/dam/visas/Statistics/AnnualReports/FY2019AnnualReport/FY19AnnualReport-TableIII.pdf>
3. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/publications/immigration-statistics/yearbook/2019/nonimmigrant_2019.pdf