



May 6, 2020

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
555 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Wicker:

We write formally requesting that Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation (the Committee) exercise its oversight authority of maritime transportation issues to investigate disturbing reports regarding the Carnival Corporation & PLC's handling of COVID-19 outbreaks aboard its vessels. We have serious concerns about any effort to resume cruise ship operations prematurely – without robust oversight to insure the health and safety of passengers and crew. We feel strongly that the Committee should investigate these troubling reports fully and promptly.

On Monday, Carnival Cruise Lines, a subsidiary cruise line of the Carnival Corporation, announced that it is planning to resume some of its operations as early as August 1, 2020.¹ This move is particularly concerning given the cruise line industry's problematic track record of managing, containing, and responding to the current pandemic. In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) highlighted that “[c]ruise ship travel markedly increases the risk and impact of the COVID-19 disease outbreak within the United States” and “there are several features of cruise ships that increase the risk of COVID-19 transmission,” including high rates of person-to-person contact, close quartering in small cabins, and difficulty decontaminating surfaces.²

According to reports, at least 39 deaths and more than 1,500 confirmed COVID-19 infections have been recorded in connection with Carnival's vessels.³ As the news surrounding outbreaks of the novel coronavirus surfaced, life aboard Carnival ships like the *Grand Princess*

¹ “Carnival Cruise Line Announces Plan To Phase-In Service,” *AP News* (New York, NY), May 4, 2020, <https://apnews.com/PR%20Newswire/54561079beeb1b4ec7ff4c98c17e55d6>.

² U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “Order Under Sections 361 & 365 Of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. §§ 264, 268) and 42 Code of Federal Regulations Part 70 (Interstate) and Part 71 (Foreign): No Sail Order and other Measures Related to Operations,” https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/pdf/signed-manifest-order_031520.pdf (accessed May 6, 2020).

³ Austin Carr and Chris Palmeri, “Carnival Executives Knew They Had a Virus Problem, But Kept the Party Going,” *Bloomberg Businessweek* (New York, NY), April 16, 2020, <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2020-carnival-cruise-coronavirus/>.

continued normally, with little effort to respond to the ongoing global pandemic. Moreover, according to experts, “several of the plagued Carnival ships didn’t even begin their voyages until well after the company knew it was risky to do so.”⁴ Even now, as cruise ship passengers have returned home, nearly 80,000 crew members remain stranded on about 100 cruise ships in or near U.S. ports.⁵ Together, these factors are deeply disturbing – at best sheer incompetence and at worst corporate negligence – and deserve our immediate attention.

The controversy surrounding these reports has sparked investigations by the U.S. House of Representatives and the Australian police force. We feel strongly that the Committee has an obligation to launch its own investigation to ensure that Carnival is held responsible for its response during these unprecedented times. We ask that the Committee’s investigation is broad and comprehensive as the situation continues to evolve. The American traveling public deserve to know the full truth.

We urge the Committee to hold hearings with the leaders of the cruise line industry and public health experts to reassure Americans of the industry’s commitment to implementing robust measures to keep passengers and crew members safe. Now more than ever, the entire industry must focus on real, systemic health and safety reform before setting sail again.

As members of the Subcommittee on Security, we look forward to working with you to address these concerns, and we thank you for your attention to this critically important matter.

Sincerely,

/s/ Richard Blumenthal

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate

/s/ Edward J. Markey

EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate

CC: The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member, U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Daton Bennet, “Cruise Ship Crews: Stuck at sea, paydays dwindling and searching for a way home,” *Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.), April 14, 2020, https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/cruise-ships-crews-stuck-at-sea-paydays-dwindling-and-searching-for-a-way-home/2020/04/14/c7d9c498-78fb-11ea-a130-df573469f094_story.html?utm_source=knewz.