

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 11, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
The President  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

We proudly represent communities where travel and tourism is a key driver of jobs and economic activity, and write today to respectfully request that fully vaccinated travelers be exempted from 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 arriving from a foreign country (“inbound testing order”).<sup>1</sup> Doing so would bring the U.S. in line with the decision of other countries to drop such testing requirements, including in Europe, Latin America and South Asia.

As you know, under the current order, inbound travelers must present a negative COVID-19 viral test conducted within one day of travel before boarding their flight into the United States – regardless of vaccination status or citizenship. This “testing window” was shortened from 72 to 24 hours in the wake of the highly-transmissible omicron variant, along with a ban on travelers from eight countries in Southern Africa (subsequently lifted).

While we understand the rationale behind the inbound testing order when it was put in place in January 2021, it continues to present a number of challenges to our constituents who must or desire to travel internationally for business or personal reasons or whose livelihoods depend on a fully functioning international travel system. These challenges range from uncertainty as to the availability of timely testing in the destination 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 recent shortening of the testing window has only exacerbated these challenges.

Beyond the impact on our constituents, it is unclear to us whether at this stage in the pandemic this rule is having any meaningful impact on the spread of COVID-19 from overseas destinations to the U.S. As of today, more than 78 million people have contracted COVID-19 in this country, meaning that at least 23 percent of the population has had the virus (though this figure is almost certainly an underestimate due to the number of asymptomatic infections and limited testing early in the pandemic). In mid-January, the seven-day average for newly reported cases in the U.S. topped 800,000, 73 percent of which were the omicron variant. Clearly, COVID-19 is widespread throughout the U.S. and attempts to control its importation via air travel under today’s circumstances are unlikely to change that fact.

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<sup>1</sup> 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](#).

As such, as we enter the third year of the pandemic and reflect on how far the science related to COVID-19 mitigation has advanced since the order was first put in place, we respectfully request that fully vaccinated travelers 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.”<sup>2</sup> Exempting fully vaccinated travelers, including almost 215 million Americans, from the order would be consistent with the scientific consensus that widespread vaccinations are 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 updates to the order.<sup>3</sup>

Moreover, a growing number of countries have recently moved in the direction of removing the pre-departure test requirement for the fully vaccinated, including the United Kingdom (U.K.), Greece, Ireland, Sweden and others, and the European Union now recommends its member states not require vaccinated residents to undergo pre-departure tests.<sup>4</sup> The U.K. concluded that the cost to both passengers and airlines of the testing mandate could no longer be justified, as there was no evidence the regime protected the population from COVID-19. This decision was supported by a January 5, 2022 study by Oxera and Edge Health that concluded when a variant is already highly prevalent in the domestic environment, travel restrictions are likely to have a very limited impact on the growth and the peak of cases and hospitalizations.

Our constituents who work in the travel industry tell us that the inbound testing order remains the single biggest barrier to the full recovery of the international travel system on which so many rely for their livelihoods. While it will take several years for the industry to return to health, we believe that exempting fully vaccinated travelers from the inbound testing order will help speed the recovery of a sector so critical to the broader U.S. economy.

As omicron cases decrease, and COVID-19 restrictions ease in many parts of the country, as we all adapt to this virus becoming endemic, we believe now is the time to remove this significant barrier affecting Americans who must and wish to travel. Thank you for considering our views on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



J. Luis Correa  
Member of Congress



María Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress

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<sup>2</sup> The White House. (2021, October.) [A Proclamation on Advancing the Safe Resumption of Global Travel During the COVID-19 Pandemic.](#)

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> Hardingham-Gill, Tamara. “[EU wants test-free travel for vaccinated residents.](#)” *CNN*. 25 January 2022.



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