



American Society of
Travel Advisors

May 29, 2020

The Honorable Carl C. Risch
Assistant Secretary
Bureau of Consular Affairs
U.S. Department of State
600 19th Street NW
Washington, DC 20431

Dear Assistant Secretary Risch:

I am writing on behalf of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA), our 14,000 member companies and their clients, the traveling public, to express our support for a swift resumption of the U.S. passport processing system.

We are keenly aware of the devastating impact the coronavirus (COVID-19) crisis has had on the travel industry, especially with regard to international travel to and from the U.S. We also understand the reasons behind the Department's standing advisory that U.S. citizens avoid all international travel due to the global impact of COVID-19, as well as the Department's decision on March 19 to limit passport processing operations to life-and-death emergencies.

That said, we are hopeful that international travel will resume in the near future, though certainly in a limited fashion and so long as the appropriate public health officials deem it safe. As it does so, the need for a resumption of normal or close-to-normal passport processing will grow in importance. Over the past few weeks we have been contacted by a number of members whose clients' plans to travel internationally in late 2020 and 2021 are at risk of being negatively impacted by their inability to apply for or renew their passports. Many of these clients applied for passport renewals before the pandemic reached full force and have been unable to secure any information from the Department about the status of their applications.

For the travel industry, a return to normalcy will be a slow and deliberate process, heavily influenced by government policy both here and abroad, and we at ASTA are committed to working toward that end with those governments, our members and the broader travel ecosystem in a way that puts the safety and health of U.S. citizens at its center. Resuming passport processing operations may be a small part of this process, but it is a critical and central one – indeed it is the foundation of Americans' long-cherished ability to travel abroad. As such, while we recognize the many challenges COVID-19 poses to the Department, we urge you to make the restoring of passport processing operations a priority as you work toward the safe resumption of international travel.

Thank you for considering ASTA's views on this critical matter. If you or your staff has any questions about this or any 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,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Zane Kerby". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Zane" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Kerby".

Zane Kerby
President and Chief Executive Officer