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U.S. TRAVEL
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March 31, 2022

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Senate Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and
Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chair Cantwell, and Ranking Member Wicker:

On behalf of our respective organizations and members, we are writing to express the travel and tourism industry’s strong support for the swift confirmation of Mr. Grant Harris to serve as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis. This position plays a critical role in helping the travel and tourism industry recover from COVID and support American jobs, and it is imperative to fill the role as quickly as possible.

Prior to the pandemic, travel and tourism was our nation’s top service export – representing 27 percent of U.S. services exports and 9 percent of all U.S. exports of goods and services in 2019. Travel also plays a critical role in job creation and supported 9 million American jobs in 2019. Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, international travel spending in the U.S. is still down 78% compared to 2019.

This is a critical time for our industry as we seek to recover from COVID and grow. We need senior level representation to help set policy and align efforts within the federal government to support the industry’s economic recovery. This is especially true as other countries are working hard to increase their market share of international travel at the expense of the United States. Additionally, the Commerce Department

is in the process of creating a new National Travel and Tourism Strategy, and quick confirmation of Mr. Harris would be instrumental in the successful development and execution of a new national strategy.

The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis is an important senior leadership role for our industry. The position works closely with Brand USA (the nation's destination marketing organization) to promote international travel to the United States. It also oversees the National Travel and Tourism Office (NTTO), the lead office for travel and tourism within the federal government. We rely on NTTO to represent the economic interests of our sector in policymaking within the federal government, to produce high-quality data on U.S. travel and tourism exports to inform private sector decision-making, and to collaborate in developing strategy and policies that support the travel and tourism industry.

Mr. Harris is highly qualified and has the right private and public sector experience to execute this important role. He brings first-hand knowledge and expertise in increasing U.S. exports and working with stakeholders abroad, which will be a critical skill set to support the recovery of international travel to the United States. He is also an uncontroversial nominee. Mr. Harris has twice been reported favorably and unanimously out of the Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee – for which we thank Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Wicker for their support – since his nomination in June 2021.

Given the urgency and high stakes for recovery, growth, and job creation in our industry, we respectfully request your support in getting Mr. Harris confirmed and into the job as soon as possible so that he can be a partner to our industry in this critical time. We thank you for your ongoing leadership and support of the travel and tourism industry as well as this opportunity to convey our views.

Sincerely,

American Hotel and Lodging Association

Airlines for America

American Society of Travel Advisors

Cruise Lines International Association

Global Business Travel Association

Near Airport Parking Industry Trade Association

U.S. Travel Association

CC:

The Honorable Jacky Rosen, Chair of the Senate Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, and Export Promotion

The Honorable Rick Scott, Ranking Member of the Senate Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, and Export Promotion

The Honorable Amy Klobuchar, Co-chair of the Senate Travel and Tourism Caucus

The Honorable Roy Blunt, Co-chair of the Senate Travel and Tourism Caucus