

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

March 9, 2021

The Honorable Rochelle P. Walensky, MD, MPH  
Director  
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)  
1600 Clifton Rd.  
Atlanta, GA 30329

Dear Dr. Walensky:

Thank you for your hard work in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic. We appreciate everything that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has done for Alaska, especially the technical assistance and support that has been provided to the Division of Public Health at the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. While we continue to make progress in the fight against COVID-19, we write to you today with serious concerns for the irreparable damage that a diminished cruise season will have in Alaska.

President Biden announced on March 2, 2021 that the U.S. is on track to have a vaccine for every adult in America by the end of this May. This is extraordinarily great news for the country; particularly in Alaska, as we are eager to safely restart the tourism-dependent segments of our economy.

In 2019, before the pandemic was upon us, 1.3 million people visited Alaska via cruise ship; 60% of all tourism to the state. The tourism industry generated more than \$214 million in state and municipal revenue, more than \$1.4 billion in payroll, and \$2.2 billion in visitor spending. Alaska's tourism industry creates 8,300 jobs annually, accounting for \$272 million in wages and earnings for Southeast Alaska alone. By all accounts, the projected season in 2020 was expected to be even more prosperous. Instead, due to CDC no sail orders, only 48 passengers arrived by cruise ship in 2020. Business and municipalities now face yet another year devoid of tourists and revenue. Those revenues fund public services that are an integral part of the COVID-19 response capabilities. The vastly diminished cruise season caused statewide unemployment to rise from 6.2 percent to 11 percent. Southeast Alaska specifically suffered greater unemployment; increasing from 4.7 percent to 11.3 percent—or 17 percent of all jobs in the region. This level of unemployment and hardship is of grave concern to the delegation and should be of similar concern to the CDC.

The CDC still has not published technical guidance for Phase II and Phase III of the Conditional Sailing Framework despite the new projections that the vaccine will be widely available across the country prior to Alaska's cruising season. Similarly, the CDC has not made it clear when the technical guidance can be expected to be published. Alaska's cruise season is limited by the few summer months, leaving no time to waste. Once the CDC publishes technical

instructions, it will take months for the cruise lines and port communities to implement those requirements. Alaska needs clarity now so that we can at least begin to prepare. We recognize the COVID-19 response is a fluid and quickly evolving situation; however, technical guidance can be updated or amended as needed. Future uncertainties do not constitute a reason to continue to delay publication. With full vaccination availability and implementable guidelines, we look forward to a safe and prosperous summer; the CDC's proactive support is an integral a part of that success.

Thank you again, for your critical work keeping Americans safe during this devastating pandemic. We hope you will continue that great work in serving Alaska and the United States during this devastating pandemic.

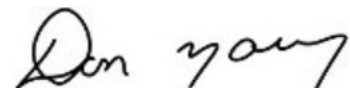
Sincerely,



Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator



Dan Sullivan  
United States Senator



Don Young  
Congressman for All Alaska

cc: Dr. Martin Cetron, Director of the Division of Global Migration and Quarantine