



CITY OF HOUSTON

Office of the Mayor

Sylvester Turner

Mayor

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June 6, 2022

Dr. Ashish Jha
White House Coronavirus Response Coordinator
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20006

Re: International Pre-Departure Testing

Dear Dr. Jha,

We strongly urge you to repeal the federal inbound testing requirement for vaccinated air travelers to the United States. This requirement makes little sense considering that nearly all other sectors of the U.S. economy are operating without a testing requirement. Stronger immunity provided by vaccinations, boosters, and prior infections, as well as effective treatments to prevent the worst outcomes of COVID-19, have enabled Americans to safely return to work, schools, and public activities – all without the need for a testing requirement. Given the slow economic recovery of cities across America – and considering the abundance of public health measures we have at our disposal – we strongly encourage you to immediately remove the inbound testing requirement for vaccinated air travelers.

American cities are still struggling to regain international visitors after more than two years of pandemic-related restrictions. In 2021, international visitation was a staggering 78% below pre-pandemic levels. Our constituents and our businesses suffered greatly from this steep decline in international travel spending, and they cannot fully recover until this vital sector of the U.S. economy rebounds. A new survey of vaccinated international travelers in France, Germany, the United Kingdom, South Korea, Japan, and India found that the pre-departure testing requirement is a deterrent to travel. More than half of international travelers (54%) said the added uncertainty of having to cancel a trip due to U.S. pre-departure testing requirements would significantly impact their likelihood to visit the U.S.; and a large majority of adults surveyed (71%) agreed that they prioritize traveling to destinations without cumbersome entry requirements.

The pre-departure testing requirement is also a deterrent to vaccinated Americans traveling abroad, as many fear being unable to return to the U.S. Many foreign governments with similar infection, vaccination, and hospitalization rates—including the United Kingdom, Germany and Canada—have already eliminated pre-departure testing requirements for vaccinated travelers.

The time has come for the United States to do the same. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sylvester Turner
Mayor