

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION[®]

June 12, 2025

Dear Senators Schumer and Gillibrand:

As representatives of travel destinations and hospitality businesses across the state of New York, we write to share urgent priorities for our industry as you consider reconciliation legislation. The United States is preparing to host a series of major global events over the next decade, including the Ryder Cup, 2026 FIFA World Cup, America250, and the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games. With the right policies in place, these events present an economic opportunity that could attract 40 million visitors and drive nearly \$100 billion in international visitor spending, helping to rebalance our travel trade deficit while supporting jobs and small businesses in all 50 states. In that context, we urge you to support policies in reconciliation that will help us prepare for upcoming global events and make America's travel industry more competitive over the next decade.

That is why we are concerned about a provision in the Senate Commerce Committee's reconciliation bill that would undercut a key tool that helps drive international visitation to the United States. Brand USA is a highly successful public-private partnership formed under the bipartisan Travel Promotion Act of 2009 charged with promoting America as a travel destination and communicating official U.S. visa and entry policies. With a statutory mandate to drive international travel to all states and regions of the country, Brand USA provides access to visitors, tour operators and markets that many of our destinations and attractions otherwise could not afford to reach.

Brand USA delivers unmatched value—using no taxpayer dollars, only ESTA fees paid by international visitors from Visa Waiver Program countries plus matching contributions from the private sector and returning over \$24 in visitor spending for every \$1 invested. Unfortunately, the Commerce Committee provision would reduce the amount of ESTA fee collections provided to Brand USA from up to \$100 million annually to only \$20 million, undermining its ability to attract visitors and leading to a loss of nearly \$2 billion in visitor spending each year, \$538 million in federal and local taxes, and impacting more than 25,000 jobs. This is also inconsistent with the President's FY26 budget, which proposes maintaining \$100 million in annual funding for Brand USA.¹ We strongly urge you to restore funding for Brand USA in the Senate to ensure we remain competitive as a premier travel destination and can reap the economic benefits of international travel and these global events across the country.

¹ [White House FY26 Budget Appendix](#), p. 1157-1158

This moment also provides an opportunity to modernize the air travel experience not only to increase our international competitiveness but to give Americans the infrastructure and experience they deserve. Current staffing shortages at airports hinder U.S. Customs and Border Protection's (CBP) ability to efficiently process travelers and cargo – creating potential security vulnerabilities, overcrowding at airports and missed or delayed connections. The \$4.1 billion investment in the House reconciliation bill to hire and train additional CBP personnel, including at least 5,000 CBP officers at ports of entry will strengthen national security, improve airport efficiency and support economic growth by ensuring the smooth flow of international travelers and goods. We also support the House's \$673 million for biometric entry-exit, including the deployment of biometric technology, which would strengthen protection against immigration overstays and allow a more secure, efficient and pleasant boarding experience for international outbound travelers without the need to show IDs or boarding passes. The House legislation also includes a much-needed \$12.5 billion down payment for Air Traffic Control modernization, which would fund critical investments in ATC technology, infrastructure and workforce. Travelers expect and deserve a first-class travel experience rooted in safety and security, and this funding is a necessary step in the right direction after years of underinvestment.

Lastly, we support provisions in the House legislation that will help local communities prepare to host major upcoming events. The bill provides \$625 million for the 2026 FIFA World Cup and \$1 billion for the 2028 LA Olympics under the State Homeland Security Grant Program for security, planning and other costs related to these events. Federal support is essential for state and local security services to mitigate risks effectively while simultaneously ensuring host cities and our law enforcement personnel can maintain services taxpayers expect in all parts of our communities throughout the duration of the events. Securing these events will showcase American exceptionalism, reinforce national security, and set the stage to host future major events with significant economic impact.

We appreciate the challenges associated with crafting such a significant legislative package. We urge you to support travel modernization policies and oppose provisions that will weaken our ability to drive international visitation during this peak opportunity of major events. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,