

The Honorable Mitch McConnell

Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

August 14, 2020

Dear Leader McConnell,

The travel and tourism industry is deeply appreciative of all you have done to support travel employees and small businesses throughout this public health and economic crisis.

Unfortunately, millions of workers and small businesses are still struggling, and we cannot afford to lose more ground in the fight to keep them afloat. Though substantial segments of the travel industry were unable to access earlier rounds of relief, Congress was making significant strides toward securing protection for this hardest hit of economic sectors before negotiations ceased last week.

The travel industry workers and small businesses who have suffered so much during this crisis need relief today. Relief cannot wait until the fall or until after the election. **Congressional and administration negotiators must come back to the table right away to find a solution to help save and bring back the jobs of millions of Americans.**

It is abundantly clear that a revival of the American economy is not possible without immediate, significant, targeted relief for travel and tourism businesses and its workforce. A new report from Tourism Economics underscores the unique pain this crisis has inflicted on the industry:

- 40% of excess U.S. unemployment is in the Leisure and Hospitality (L&H) sector, despite that sector accounting for 11% of all pre-pandemic employment in the U.S.
- Nearly half of the 16.9 million jobs in the L&H sector were wiped out in March and April.
- If every industry recovered to its pre-pandemic employment level except for L&H, the overall employment rate would fall from 10.2% to 6.2%—still 2.7% higher than pre-pandemic levels.

To restore these vital jobs and put millions of Americans back to work, Congress must immediately extend the Paycheck Protection Program and expand its eligibility to include nonprofit and quasi-governmental destination marketing organizations. Failure to do so will jeopardize an economic recovery before it even begins.

Destination marketing organizations are small business champions, driving demand for travel businesses in every congressional district. Once Americans are ready to travel again in earnest, these are the organizations that will bring back the visitors who will spend tourism dollars in restaurants, shops, hotels and attractions—and by extension, other travel-dependent businesses across economic sectors—restoring jobs and providing a much-needed boost to communities throughout the country. These are the very businesses the Paycheck Protection Program originally sought to protect, and they desperately need a lifeline—not only to survive this crisis, but to help lead a nationwide economic recovery.

Please, this cannot afford to wait any longer. The entire travel and tourism industry—and the millions of workers whose livelihoods depend on this industry—urges you to return to the negotiating table right away and finish the good work you began. Americans are counting on it.

Sincerely,

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Executive Director
Blue Grass Airport

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Karen Williams
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Mark Looy
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Nancy Allen Turner
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