

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 18, 2020

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

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

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

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy  
Minority Leader  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Speaker Pelosi, Leader McConnell, Leader Schumer, and Leader McCarthy:

A number of industries have stated that they intend to seek financial assistance from Congress for losses related to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic. For example, U.S. airlines announced that they are seeking \$50 billion in financial assistance, or three times the size of the aid package they received after the September 11 attacks.<sup>1</sup> President Trump has signaled that he intends to help other industries as well, including the cruise line industry.<sup>2</sup>

Given the poor environmental records of some companies in these industries, we believe that any such financial assistance should be paired with requirements that companies act in a more responsible fashion. Air travel currently accounts for approximately 2.5 percent of total carbon dioxide emissions globally, and commercial aviation emissions are expected to triple by 2050.<sup>3</sup> The foreign-flagged cruise industry has a checkered environmental record and most passenger liners burn heavy fuel oil, one of the dirtiest fuels.<sup>4</sup>

Given the large carbon footprint of commercial aviation, requiring reductions in carbon emissions would represent a major step in curbing our nation's greenhouse gas emissions. Requiring reductions in carbon pollution from foreign-flagged cruise ships, as well as reductions

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<sup>1</sup> Alison Sider and Ted Mann, "Airlines Seek \$50 Billion Coronavirus Aid Package," *The Wall Street Journal* (March 16, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/airlines-seek-up-to-50-billion-in-government-aid-amid-coronavirus-crisis-11584378242>

<sup>2</sup> Hannah Sampson and Meryl Kornfield, "Trump offers support for cruise lines during coronavirus outbreak – while asking them to stop sailing," *The Washington Post* (March 13, 2020), <https://www.washingtonpost.com/travel/2020/03/13/trump-offers-support-cruise-lines-during-coronavirus-outbreak-while-asking-them-stop-sailing/>

<sup>3</sup> Hiroko Tabuchi, "'Worse Than Anyone Expected': Air Travel Emissions Vastly Outpace Predictions," *The New York Times* (Sept. 19, 2019), <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/09/19/climate/air-travel-emissions.html>

<sup>4</sup> Adrienne Jordan, "Environmental group grades cruise lines: Disney gets an A-; most others get F's," *USA Today* (July 2, 2019), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/cruises/2019/07/02/disney-cruise-line-gets-highest-grade-environmental-report-card/1626392001/>

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in other air pollutants and increased penalties for illegal dumping, would result in cleaner air and a healthier ocean.

Business leaders are themselves increasingly recognizing that their companies must make positive contributions to society or risk losing their social license.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly true when companies ask American taxpayers for financial assistance.

If we give the airline and cruise industries assistance without requiring them to be better environmental stewards, we would miss a major opportunity to combat climate change and ocean dumping. At a recent hearing of the Senate Democrats' Special Committee on the Climate Crisis, several financial experts testified about the severe risks climate change poses to our economy. In light of this, efforts to address carbon pollution make good financial and economic sense.

Thank you for your consideration of this request, and we stand ready to assist you.

Sincerely,

SHELDON WHITEHOUSE  
United States Senate

MARTIN HEINRICH  
United States Senate

JEFFREY A. MERKLEY  
United States Senate

CORY BOOKER  
United States Senate

EDWARD J. MARKEY  
United States Senate

RICHARD BLUMENTHAL  
United States Senate

TINA SMITH  
United States Senate

DEBBIE STABENOW  
United States Senate

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<sup>5</sup> See, e.g., Larry Fink's 2018 Letter to CEOs, *available at* <https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/investor-relations/2018-larry-fink-ceo-letter>; Business Roundtable Statement on the Purpose of a Corporation, *available at* <https://opportunity.businessroundtable.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/BRT-Statement-on-the-Purpose-of-a-Corporation-with-Signatures.pdf>