



Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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May 1, 2020

Mr. Arnold W. Donald  
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Mr. Donald:

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic began to race around the world, affecting local communities, churches, cities, homes, hospitals, and cruise ships sailing at sea, the cruise industry had a problem managing, containing, and responding to public health outbreaks. During a Royal Caribbean cruise on the *Oasis of the Seas* ship in January 2019, which departed from Port Canaveral, Florida, 592 passengers and crew fell ill with the norovirus, described by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as an “ultra-contagious gastrointestinal illness.”<sup>1</sup> The CDC said this was “more than the total number of passengers who fell ill from the norovirus on every cruise that set sail in 2018,” *Kaiser Health News* reported.<sup>2</sup> The CDC identified the *Oasis of the Seas* incident as one of ten norovirus outbreaks on cruise ships last year.<sup>3</sup> According to the CDC, half of the cruise lines that had norovirus outbreaks in 2019 were Carnival Corporation owned ships.<sup>4</sup>

Norovirus and other communicable diseases are not new public health threats to the cruise line industry. In 2010, the World Health Organization (WHO) identified norovirus and influenza outbreaks as “the major public health challenges for the cruise industry.”<sup>5</sup> This assessment was made an entire decade before COVID-19 emerged on the world’s stage.

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<sup>1</sup> “Investigation Update on the Oasis of the Seas,” Vessel Sanitation Program, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: [https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp/surv/outbreak/2019/Oasis\\_of\\_the\\_Seas\\_1-6.html](https://www.cdc.gov/nceh/vsp/surv/outbreak/2019/Oasis_of_the_Seas_1-6.html). Cruise Line: Royal Caribbean International; Cruise Ship: *Oasis of the Seas*; Voyage Dates: January 6–13, 2019.

<sup>2</sup> Bruce Horowitz, “How Cruise Ship Passengers Should Prepare For Sickness Or Injury At Sea,” *Kaiser Health News*, September 20, 2019, accessed here: <https://khn.org/news/how-cruise-ship-passengers-should-prepare-for-sickness-or-injury-at-sea/>.

<sup>3</sup> “CDC Cruise Ship Outbreak Summary,” Shipdetective.com. accessed here: [http://www.shipdetective.com/ships/cdc/outbreak\\_summary\\_cruise\\_ships.htm](http://www.shipdetective.com/ships/cdc/outbreak_summary_cruise_ships.htm).

<sup>4</sup> Five of the ten 2019 norovirus outbreaks occurred on three Carnival Corporation owned cruise lines, including three outbreaks on AIDA Cruises (*AIDAdiva* and *AIDAAluna*), one outbreak on Carnival Cruise Lines (*Conquest*) and one outbreak on Princess Cruises (*Island Princess*). See: “CDC Cruise Ship Outbreak Summary,” Shipdetective.com. accessed here: [http://www.shipdetective.com/ships/cdc/outbreak\\_summary\\_cruise\\_ships.htm](http://www.shipdetective.com/ships/cdc/outbreak_summary_cruise_ships.htm).

<sup>5</sup> Ross Dowling and Clare Weeden, “Cruise Ship Tourism,” (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), 2017, accessed here: <https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ePMsDgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA220&dq=cruise+ship+health+s>.

On March 23, 2020, the CDC reported that the *Diamond Princess*, with 328 Americans onboard, and the *Grand Princess*, which docked in the United States, had more than 800 total COVID-19 cases, including 10 deaths.<sup>6</sup> Both are operated by Princess Cruises, a subsidiary cruise line of the Carnival Corporation. The number of confirmed COVID-19 cases on those two ships is more than all of the confirmed cases in the states of Montana, Wyoming, North Dakota, Alaska, or Hawaii as of April 22, 2020.<sup>7</sup> According to the CDC, “During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the *Diamond Princess* was the setting of the largest outbreak outside mainland China.” *Bloomberg* has reported that at least nine of Carnival’s ships have been infected with COVID-19 resulting in more than 1,500 confirmed infections and at least 39 deaths.<sup>8</sup>

Cruise ships are a fertile breeding ground for infectious diseases due to their environmental conditions and physical structure. “Cruise ships passengers spend prolonged periods in close proximity to other passengers and crew, facilitating the rapid spread of highly infectious agents such as influenza,” the *Journal of Travel Medicine* reported in 2018.<sup>9</sup> Today, the CDC warns: “Cruise ships are often settings for outbreaks of infectious diseases because of their closed environment, contact between travelers from many countries, and crew transfers between ships.”<sup>10</sup>

As the world continues to confront the coronavirus pandemic, we expect that travel restrictions will eventually ease, and cruise ships will begin to sail again. We also believe that when that happens, more robust health precautions and new social distancing protocols will be paramount to preventing the re-emergence and spread of new COVID-19 infections. The CDC, for instance, has linked the spread of COVID-19 from passengers on cruise ships to 15 states.<sup>11</sup>

Our Committee, the U.S. Congress, and the American public need to be assured that the global cruise line industry, and Carnival Corporation & PLC in particular, are instituting necessary measures to ensure that the safety of the traveling public and crew members will be your number one priority when your ships set sail again. While cruises are often viewed as a care-free escape from reality where passengers can dine, dance, relax, and mingle, we would hope that the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic will place a renewed emphasis on public health and passenger safety, but frankly that has not been seen up to this point. In fact, it seems as though Carnival Corporation and its portfolio of nine cruise lines, which represents 109 cruise ships, is still trying to sell this cruise line

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[afety&ots= 59WPocxUG&sig=VhLxIUSN4CMA S5RJLazRvCMGR8#v=onepage&q=cruise%20ship%20health%20safety&f=false](https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e3.htm).

<sup>6</sup> “Public Health Responses to COVID-19 Outbreaks on Cruise Ships — Worldwide, February–March 2020,” *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, March 27, 2020 / 69(12); 347–352, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e3.htm>.

<sup>7</sup> “Number of COVID-19 Cases in the U.S., by State or Territory,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: [https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html#anchor\\_1586784349](https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/cases-updates/cases-in-us.html#anchor_1586784349).

<sup>8</sup> Austin Carr and Chris Palmeri, “Carnival Executives Knew They Had a Virus Problem, But Kept the Party Going,” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, April 16, 2020, accessed here: <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2020-carnival-cruise-coronavirus/>.

<sup>9</sup> Barnaby E. Young and Annelies Wilder-Smith, “Influenza on cruise ships,” *Journal of Travel Medicine*, Volume 25, Issue 1, December 31, 2018, accessed here: <https://academic.oup.com/jtm/article-abstract/25/1/tay146/5238721>.

<sup>10</sup> “Public Health Responses to COVID-19 Outbreaks on Cruise Ships — Worldwide, February–March 2020,” *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, March 27, 2020 / 69(12); 347–352, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e3.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> “Public Health Responses to COVID-19 Outbreaks on Cruise Ships — Worldwide, February–March 2020,” *Morbidity & Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR)*, March 27, 2020 / 69(12); 347–352, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here: <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/69/wr/mm6912e3.htm>.

fantasy and ignoring the public health threat posed by coronavirus to potential future passengers and crew.<sup>12</sup>

As of April 23, 2020, none of the front facing web-pages from any of Carnival's nine affiliated cruise lines , – Carnival Cruise Line,<sup>13</sup> Princess Cruises,<sup>14</sup> Holland America Line,<sup>15</sup> Seabourn,<sup>16</sup> P&O Cruises (Australia),<sup>17</sup> Costa Cruises,<sup>18</sup> AIDA Cruises,<sup>19</sup> P&O Cruises (UK),<sup>20</sup> and Cunard<sup>21</sup> – mentioned a single word about COVID-19, coronavirus, or the precautions these cruise lines intend to take once the CDC lifts its “No Sail Order” for cruise lines.<sup>22</sup> Instead, these sites are advertising various images of couples dining and dancing, musicians entertaining, and lines of children holding hands and playing.

We understand your business and economic livelihood is focused in the entertainment and travel industry, but the realities of the coronavirus pandemic demand that the incentive to entertain is checkered by a responsibility to protect the health of passengers and crew. Unfortunately, recent media reports have called into question Carnival's commitment to that goal.

Three years before the coronavirus pandemic emerged a book on “Cruise Ship Tourism” observed: “the cruise industry needs to undertake a proactive approach in crisis management, paying more attention to emerging health issues as well as preparing itself with comprehensive and exhaustive crisis management plans.”<sup>23</sup> However, based on the Carnival Corporation's response , to the current coronavirus crisis it appears that sort of advice was not heeded. In particular, recent allegations by a media report in *Bloomberg* are quite disturbing.<sup>24</sup> They suggest that officials at Carnival were aware of the threats to some of its ships and did not take appropriate actions, which may have led to greater infections and the spread of the disease. Even a senior CDC official who leads the CDC's cruise ship task force was quoted as saying she had a hard time believing that Carnival was simply “a victim of happenstance.”<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> “Our Brands,” Carnival Corporation & PLC, accessed here: <https://www.carnivalcorp.com/corporate-information/our-brands>.

<sup>13</sup> Carnival Cruise Line, accessed here: [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/brandpage\\_ccl.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_ccl.html).

<sup>14</sup> Princess Cruises, accessed here: [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/brandpage\\_PCL.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_PCL.html).

<sup>15</sup> Holland America Line, accessed here: [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/BrandPage.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/BrandPage.html).

<sup>16</sup> Seabourn, accessed here: [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/brandpage\\_SBN.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_SBN.html).

<sup>17</sup> P&O Cruises (Australia), accessed here:

[https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/BrandPage\\_POAustralia.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/BrandPage_POAustralia.html).

<sup>18</sup> Costa Cruises, accessed here: [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/BrandPage\\_Costa.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/BrandPage_Costa.html).

<sup>19</sup> AIDA Cruises, [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/brandpage\\_AIDA.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_AIDA.html).

<sup>20</sup> P&O Cruises (UK), accessed here: [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/brandpage\\_POCruises.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_POCruises.html).

<sup>21</sup> Cunard, accessed here: [https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en\\_US/brandpage\\_CUN.html](https://www.worldsleadingcruiselines.com/en_US/brandpage_CUN.html).

<sup>22</sup> “Quarantine and Isolation: Cruise Ship Guidance,” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), accessed here, <https://www.cdc.gov/quarantine/cruise/index.html>.

<sup>23</sup> Ross Dowling and Clare Weeden, “Cruise Ship Tourism,” (2<sup>nd</sup> Edition), 2017, accessed here:

[https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ePMsDgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA220&dq=cruise+ship+health+safety&ots=59WPocxUG&sig=VhLxIUSN4CMA\\_S5RjLazRvCMGR8#v=onepage&q=cruise%20ship%20health%20safety&f=false](https://books.google.com/books?hl=en&lr=&id=ePMsDgAAQBAJ&oi=fnd&pg=PA220&dq=cruise+ship+health+safety&ots=59WPocxUG&sig=VhLxIUSN4CMA_S5RjLazRvCMGR8#v=onepage&q=cruise%20ship%20health%20safety&f=false).

<sup>24</sup> Austin Carr and Chris Palmeri, “Carnival Executives Knew They Had a Virus Problem, But Kept the Party Going” *Bloomberg Businessweek*, April 16, 2020, accessed here: <https://www.bloomberg.com/features/2020-carnival-cruise-coronavirus/>.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

The Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure of the U.S. House of Representatives has broad jurisdiction over maritime transportation issues, including those issues related to passenger vessels and various international treaties, including the International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS). As you know, all cruise ships – regardless of what flag they are registered under or where they sail – must operate in full compliance with SOLAS convention standards which regulate maritime safety related issues.

In order to gain a better understanding of how Carnival intends to protect passengers and crew once vessels resume sailing, we request that you provide the Committee with the information Carnival Corporation cruise lines had, and when, regarding potential infections, public health implications, and possible exposure of its passengers and crew to COVID-19, as well as the decisions made by Carnival Corporation and its various affiliated lines regarding the health and safety of their passengers and crew. Specifically, we request the records listed below. The search for all records listed below may be limited to January 1, 2020, to the present.

In addition, we want to ensure that the search parameters below are sufficient to gather the information we deem necessary to carry out our oversight. If there are specific terms or nomenclature that has been used by Carnival Corporation or any of its affiliated cruise lines in lieu of specific references to “COVID-19” or “coronavirus” please add those specific references or terms to the search requests below where appropriate.

1. A copy of all of Carnival Corporation’s fleetwide Outbreak Prevention and Response Plans that were in effect at any time from January 1, 2020, onwards. This should include all individualized prevention and/or response plans for specific infectious diseases, such as norovirus and influenza.
  - a. A copy of all COVID-19 or coronavirus specific prevention and/or response plans. This should include all draft prevention and/or response plans. It should also include all COVID-19 response plans that had been in place as well as future prevention and response plans that Carnival intends to implement when the CDC’s “No Sail” order is lifted.
2. All records discussing, referring to, or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus from all employees at Carnival Corporation’s headquarters in Miami, Florida.
  - a. This should include, but not be limited to, memorandum, action items, reports, health alerts, or similar records related to COVID-19 or coronavirus.
  - b. This request should also include correspondence, including, but not limited to, letters, e-mails, text messages, instant messages, or other communication modes to, from, or between all employees at Carnival Corporation’s headquarters in Miami, Florida relating to COVID-19 or coronavirus.
3. All records discussing, referring to, or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus, prepared, written, or approved by any ship’s officer, or medical or health care related staff, on any

Carnival Corporation ship, particularly any of the nine reported Carnival ships that reported positive cases of COVID-19.<sup>26</sup>

- a. This should also include, but not be limited to, all notice of arrival information provided to the United States Coast Guard (USCG) and CDC in compliance with Marine Safety Information Bulletin 06-20, including action items, reports, health alerts, or similar records related to COVID-19 or coronavirus on any Carnival Corporation affiliated cruise ship making a port call in the United States.
4. All correspondence between any crew member, ship's officer, or medical or health care related staff, on any Carnival Corporation affiliated ship, with the CDC, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the USCG, the California Department of Public Health or the Florida Department of Health discussing, referring to, or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus.
  5. All correspondence between any employee at Carnival Corporation's headquarters with any individual crew member(s), ship's officer(s), or medical or health care related staff, on any Carnival Corporation affiliated ship, discussing, referring to, or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus. At a minimum, this request should apply to all nine Carnival ships that reported positive cases of COVID-19.
    - a. This should also include, but not be limited to, all correspondence from any employee at Carnival Corporation's headquarters to or from any individuals or organizations outside of Carnival Corporation discussing, referring to, or referencing COVID-19 or coronavirus.
    - b. This should also include, but not be limited to, all correspondence from any employee at Carnival Corporation's headquarters with the CDC, HHS, USCG, the California Department of Public Health, Florida Department of Health or the White House's COVID-19 Economic Recovery Task Force also known as the "Great American Economic Revival Industry Group" on Hospitality.

We appreciate your prompt attention to this matter. Please see the attachment for instructions regarding the preparation of these records. Please deliver one set of these records electronically to the Majority Staff and one set of records electronically to the Minority Staff.

We request that delivery of these records begin on May 15, 2020. We will consider a rolling production of these records if you are unable to fully complete this response by this date. However, for any delay beyond the May 15, 2020, deadline, your staff must coordinate a timeline with the Committee's staff.

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<sup>26</sup> *Bloomberg* reported that COVID-19 infections occurred on board the following Carnival owned ships: Diamond Princess, Costa Magica, Costa Favolosa, Grand Princess, Ruby Princess, Costa Luminosa, Costa Victoria, Zaandam, and the Coral Princess.

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May 1, 2020

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To make arrangements for electronic delivery of these records, or if you have any questions regarding this request, please have your staff contact [REDACTED] of the Majority Staff at [REDACTED] or via e-mail at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



PETER A. DeFAZIO  
Chair



SEAN PATRICK MALONEY  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard  
and Maritime Transportation

Enclosure: Attachment A – Responding to House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Records requests in the 116th Congress

cc: The Honorable Sam Graves, Ranking Member

The Honorable Bob Gibbs, Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation