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Comments of the Port of Seattle
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Health and Human Services
Request for Information, Docket No. CDC-2020-0087
Cruise Ship Planning and Infrastructure, Resumption of Passenger Operations, & Additional Questions

The Port of Seattle offers the comments that follow to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Prevention in response to the request for information on matters pertaining to the safe restart of cruise operations.

The Port of Seattle is an independent special purpose government representing the people of King County, Washington. The port is one of the largest cruise ports in the nation, serving 1.2 million passengers and 211 vessel calls in 2019. In addition to our cruise operation, the port also operates Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, serves as home port for the North Pacific fishing fleet, and manages a variety of recreational marinas, industrial lands, and economic development and environmental programs, as well as one of the nation's largest marine cargo gateways, which we manage under The Northwest Seaport Alliance, a partnership between our port and the Port of Tacoma.

Cruise activity at the Port of Seattle consists primarily of homeport vessel calls for voyages to Alaska. This business has grown steadily over the last two decades and has become an important asset for our regional economy. The cruise business supports more than 5,500 jobs and generates nearly \$900 million a year in local business revenue and \$14.5 million in annual state and local taxes. It also was expected to bring in \$26 million in revenue in 2020 for the Port of Seattle.

We are eager to restart cruise operations given the importance of this industry to the port and our region. Yet the safety of the port workforce, crewmembers, passengers and our communities is our highest priority. We look forward to the day when federal and local health authorities determine it is safe to resume cruise operations and the cruise industry can rebound and play a role in supporting economic recovery.

We greatly appreciate that the CDC is prioritizing an exploration of how cruising can reopen safely and encourage you to continue this important work. Thank you for the opportunity to comment. We look forward to continued engagement as the CDC continues its work on guidance for a safe restart to cruise operations.

6a. What arrangements should cruise ship operators have with private companies to transport and obtain medical care shoreside for passengers and crew with severe COVID-19?

Primary responsibility for arranging medical care for passengers and crew members should rest with the cruise ship operator. Cruise ship operators should coordinate with local public health officials to develop plans for providing transportation and shoreside care (including for passengers who have been

evacuated from ships at sea) at each home port and port of call. Cruise ship operators should engage port and terminal operators as plans are developed to seek input on operational details and to provide general awareness. These plans should specify roles of the public and private entities expected to provide transportation and shoreside care and should be approved by local health authorities before cruising is allowed to resume at a given port. For any transportation or shoreside care responsibilities that will be performed by third parties, cruise ship operators should have arrangements in place with those entities prior to the start of the cruise season. Shoreside care plans should include arrangements for isolation and quarantine facilities following patients' discharge from a clinic or hospital.

7. What pre-arrangements should be made to ensure that all U.S. seaport communities will accept a returning ship after a COVID-19 outbreak is identified?

A written letter of agreement (LOA) should be established between the cruise line and each port they call on during an itinerary. Signatories should include the port authority, local health officials and the U.S. Coast Guard. In developing the LOA, the signatories should consult with the municipal government in which a port is located and the respective state governor.

The CDC should be involved in this issue. Port of Seattle assumes that cruise lines will be required to have a CDC-approved plan in place to support safe operations following the lifting of the no sail order. Arrangements with seaport communities for accepting returning ships (as well as other issues discussed in this RFI, including detailed plans for quarantine and isolation of passengers and crew, shoreside medical care and transportation of passengers or crew to their homes) should be covered in these CDC-approved plans.

Agreements with seaport communities and arrangements for shoreside care in those communities should not be a replacement for sufficient medical capacity on board a cruise ship.

8. What plans should cruise ship operators have for operationalizing shoreside quarantine facilities in the event of a COVID-19 outbreak on board a ship, without exposing the public and without relying on Federal, State, or local resources?

Cruise lines should identify and secure (through written agreements) at least two options where they would transfer passengers and/or crew needing quarantine facilities. Documentation showing quarantine facilities have been secured and details on the locations should be included in CDC-approved operations plans, as well as in the LOA referenced above regarding the readiness of port communities to accept returning ships with COVID-19 outbreaks.

11. What measures should cruise ship operators be required to take to reduce the burden on U.S. government resources if foreign seaports deny cruise ships the ability to come into port during a voyage?

U.S. government agencies should not be burdened with costs or resources. Cruise lines should be responsible for all costs.

16g. Should cruise ship operators transport and house passengers and crew denied boarding at the seaport to avoid exposing the public?

Yes, cruise ship operators should transport and house passengers who are denied boarding. Seaport communities should not be expected to assume the risk from sick passengers who are turned away nor the costs of mitigating the risk. Cruise lines' procedures for transporting and housing passengers should be developed in consultation with and approved by public health authorities. These procedures should be specified in cruise lines' CDC-approved operations plans and should include measures to enable the denied person to access testing, medical care if necessary, quarantine and isolation housing and support, and transportation back home.

19a. What precautions should cruise ship operators take during shore excursions to prevent passengers and crew from being exposed to COVID-19?

In ports of call, shore excursions should be limited to cruise line-controlled offerings and conducted in a manner consistent with state and local public health jurisdictions' policies. Policies for shore excursions should be developed in consultation with and approved by public health authorities. These policies should be included in cruise lines' CDC-approved operations plans.

24. Because of the economic costs associated with cruising, some cruise ship passengers may be reluctant to cancel travel plans if they become ill or are exposed to COVID-19 or may try to hide symptoms of illness. Should cruise ship operators fully refund or provide incentives to passengers that:

- a. are denied boarding due to COVID-like illness symptoms, confirmed infection, or known exposure?**
- b. are denied boarding due to coming from high-incidence geographic areas?**
- c. request last-minute cancellations due to COVID-19 concerns?**

Yes, cruise ship operators should fully compensate passengers in these situations.