



Airlines for America
We Connect the World



U.S. TRAVEL
ASSOCIATION



April 26, 2022

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

The travel and tourism industry is grateful for your leadership throughout the pandemic. We applaud your efforts to increase vaccination rates and boost testing capacity, paving the way to a brighter future for the American people.

We urge the Administration to formalize a plan to get federal workers back into the office as well as restarting federal business travel once again. In accordance with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) recommendations and the Safer Federal Workforce Task Force guidance, individuals can now go back to work safely with the correct protocols in place. Previously, the Task Force—in collaboration with the White House’s Office of Management and Budget, the Office of Personnel Management, and the General Services Administration—asked all agencies to complete their planning for reentry by July 2021. Due to new COVID-19 variants that were prevalent at that time, this policy was sidelined. However, with the significant progress being made in the fight against the pandemic, agencies should submit their plans for reopening as soon as possible. We implore your administration to strongly suggest a plan for all agencies reopening and post re-entry procedures to promote uniformity amongst agencies. By initiating a re-entry plan, the federal workforce would serve as a model for the rest of the country.

Throughout the pandemic, the travel and tourism industry has strongly supported federal policies that were necessary to combat COVID-19, including vaccine requirements, international travel restrictions, and the federal mask mandate. Now, with 75% of adult Americans fully vaccinated, hospitalizations down by 77%, and more science-based knowledge on how to manage

the virus, the hospitality industry looks forward to endemic policies and communications that encourage a return to normalcy.

During your State of the Union address, we were thrilled to hear you announce, “it’s time for Americans to get back to work and fill our great downtowns again. People working from home can feel safe to begin to return to the office... the vast majority of federal workers will once again work in person.” Because of the hard work of our public health officials and government leaders, Americans can remove their masks, return to the office, and travel for work *safely*. To that end, the federal government—the largest purchaser of business travel in the U.S.—can get on the road again and help revive this crucial sector of the U.S. economy. Government travel spending traditionally supports tens of thousands of jobs and more than \$4 billion in travel spending, lifting up communities in every pocket of the country.

This is critically important, as the U.S. travel industry—particularly the business travel sector—has struggled to recover from the pandemic. Business travel spending is still down 56% from 2019 levels, which has a disproportionate impact on the travel economy. Despite making up just 20% of total trip volume, business travelers accounted for 40-60% of lodging and air revenue pre-pandemic.

This segment will continue to struggle until we return to the office, resume business travel, and get back to in-person meetings. According to a study by San Diego State University, business travel and in-person meetings facilitate productivity, build organizational strength, and foster collaboration in a way that virtual interactions cannot.¹ Among millennials, the largest population in the workforce, 80% says they prefer in-person communication with their colleagues, showing that the face-to-face connections are vital to employee satisfaction. Additionally, according to a recent survey conducted by Morning Consult, nearly two-thirds of workers and 77% of business travelers agree that bringing back in-person experiences, such as business trips and conferences, is more important than ever.²

We encourage you to prioritize opening our cities back up and getting federal workers traveling for work again. With kids back in the classroom and sporting and concert venues open for live events, it is time to exit out of Zoom and return to the workplace.

Thank you for encouraging our federal workforce to get back into the office. We look forward to working with you on ensuring a healthy and safe return to normalcy.

Sincerely,

Airlines for America
American Hotel and Lodging Association
Global Business Travel Association
U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Travel Association

¹ Winston, C., & Cain, L. (2022). Business Travel and In-Person Meetings to Provide Post-Pandemic Boost. *San Diego State University*. Analysis can be found [here](#).

² More information on Morning Consultant survey results can be found [here](#).