



October 29, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone
Chairman, House Energy and Commerce Committee
2107 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Greg Walden
Ranking Member, House Energy and
Commerce Committee
2185 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Jan Schakowsky
Chairwoman, Consumer Protection and Commerce
Subcommittee
2367 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Cathy McMorris Rodgers
Ranking Member, Consumer Protection and Commerce
Subcommittee
1035 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Pallone, Ranking Member Walden, Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member McMorris Rodgers:

On behalf of the American Hotel & Lodging Association (AHLA), the sole national association representing all segments of the U.S. lodging industry and its more than 8 million associates, including global brands, hotel owners, REITs, franchisees, management companies, independent properties, bed and breakfasts, state hotel associations, and industry suppliers, I write to thank you for holding today's hearing in the Consumer Protection & Commerce Subcommittee in regards to H.R. 3851, *Travel Promotion, Enhancement, and Modernization Act of 2019*. AHLA strongly supports this commonsense, bipartisan legislation which secures Brand USA's long-term reauthorization -- extending the organization's funding mechanism through 2027 -- and is sponsored by Welch (VT at Large), Bilirakis (FL-12), Titus (NV-01), Walden (OR-02), and Long (MO-07).

Created by Congress in 2009, Brand USA is a public-private partnership that serves as the nation's first cooperative destination marketing organization. Working with over 800 partners, Brand USA is responsible for increasing international visits to the United States by 6.6 million since fiscal year 2013, generating \$21.8 billion in visitor spending and supporting an average of nearly 52,000 jobs per year. Brand USA is funded by the Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA) fees assessed to international travelers visiting the U.S. from Visa Waiver Program (VWP) countries up to \$100 million and is matched by contributions from the private sector. Any funds collected in excess of \$100 million go toward driving down the federal debt and in FY19 alone, \$60 million is expected to go toward driving down the debt. Despite its undeniable return on investment and clear benefits to our nation's economy without any cost to the American taxpayer, the future of Brand USA is in jeopardy due to the diversion of its funding source and the expiration of its authorization in 2020.

Travel and tourism are key drivers of the American economy, fueling one in every ten American jobs. According to the Department of Commerce's National Travel and Tourism Office, traveler spending in the United States generated \$255.5 billion in exports in 2018 and supported 7.8 million jobs.

AHLA, along with the broader travel industry, is confident that Congress can once again come together to renew this valuable program. Brand USA was reauthorized in 2014 with broad bipartisan support, and as recently as July,

received bipartisan support with over 100 Members of Congress urging its reauthorization on a "Dear Colleague" letter to leadership.

AHLA strongly supports legislation to reauthorize Brand USA and we urge you to favorably report this critical legislation out of your committee.

Thank for your consideration

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "B. Crawford".

Brian C. Crawford
Executive Vice President, Government Affairs
American Hotel & Lodging Association

CC: House Committee on Energy and Commerce, Consumer Protection and Commerce Subcommittee