

U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION®

Dear Chairwoman Schakowsky and Ranking Member Bilirakis,

Thank you for holding this legislative hearing on “Investing in American Jobs: Legislation to Strengthen Manufacturing and Competitiveness.” On behalf of the U.S. Travel Association, which represents all sectors of the U.S. travel industry, I write in strong support of the **Restoring Brand USA Act** (H.R. 4594).

The news last month that the U.S. would soon reopen to vaccinated international travelers was a positive development, but visitors will not return automatically. To accelerate a safe return of foreign visitors and shorten the timeline for economic recovery, travel workers and businesses will need the support of Brand USA. To ensure adequate funding for Brand USA’s vital marketing and promotional services, Congress must act quickly to pass the bill **this year**.

The pandemic decimated Brand USA’s funding model and the program’s future is in jeopardy. Brand USA receives 50% of its funding from revenue collected through a fee that international visitors from Visa Waiver Program countries pay when applying to come to the U.S.—a revenue source that has been virtually non-existent since March 2020.

The Restoring Brand USA Act would provide one-time emergency funding to allow Brand USA to restart its promotional campaigns and help revive the U.S. travel economy. Best of all, the Act provides the emergency funding from surplus fees that were previously collected from foreign visitors and originally established to fund Brand USA – ensuring the program continues to be funded without the use of American taxpayer dollars.

Since Brand USA was established by the bipartisan Travel Promotion Act of 2009, it has brought more than 7.5 million international visitors to the U.S., generating a total economic impact of \$55 billion, and supporting over 52,000 jobs annually. For each dollar invested in Brand USA, the return-on-investment is 25-to-1. Brand USA has historically received strong bipartisan support, most recently with the overwhelming 2019 passage of the Brand USA Extension Act.

Brand USA’s strong return on investment, combined with its focus on promoting both urban and rural areas, makes the program an indispensable tool as the U.S. seeks to regain its share of the global travel market and restore lost jobs.

On behalf of the entire U.S. travel industry, we thank you for your continued support of Brand USA and the U.S. travel industry, and encourage Congress to enact the bill this year.

Best,

Tori Emerson Barnes
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