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INTERNATIONAL CRUISE VICTIMS CALL FOR CDC TO EXTEND NO SAIL ORDER INDEFINITELY

<LOS ANGELES, CA>--International Cruise Victims, Inc. called on the Center for Disease Control to indefinitely extend its No Sail Order, by submitting comments as part of the agency's request for information related to the cruise ship's industry role in spreading COVID-19 throughout the globe.

ICV, founded in 2006, is an advocacy organization representing victims of tragic events that have occurred at sea, including crimes such as sexual assaults (an alarming percentage of which have been committed against minors), inadequate medical attention, overboard accidents, mysterious disappearances, fires, ships that have capsized, and the rampant spread of deadly illnesses including but not limited to COVID-19.

“Since the beginning of this public health crisis, the cruise industry has knowingly contributed to the far-reaching spread of COVID-19,” said Jamie Barnett, president of ICV. “A point in reference is the fact that one cruise line alone has single-handedly been responsible for at least 39 fatalities amongst its passengers as well as initiating outbreaks in communities around the globe that led to countless more illnesses and deaths. For the sake of those who have been and for those who stand to become directly impacted by cruise line's negligence, we are looking for tangible, enforceable actions and legitimate oversight in order to prove that the pronouncement the cruise lines have been repeating for years -- that passenger and crew safety is their number one priority -- is more than lip service.

According to the comments, “With the spread of the COVID-19 virus, ICV cannot sit idly by and watch the cruise industry put their passengers, crew, and the global population at risk. They have shown us time and time again their deficiency in preventing or controlling viral outbreaks on their ships, and now it is time to force them to change their ways. ... To allow cruise lines to forge ahead in their business as usual way, would be irresponsible and deadly not only for countless passengers and crew, but for the thousands of people forced to interact with them in various ports and upon their return. For decades the cruise industry has been motivated by protecting their profits more than their passengers. It is clear to us that instead of learning from and correcting their deadly mistakes, they will continue to repeat them until and unless they can be forcefully stopped.”

ICV's comments recommend detailed policies for handling COVID-19 to ensure the cruise industry will follow public health guidelines issued by the CDC. An overview includes...

- Integrating onto each ship an independent COVID-19 Compliance Officer who is responsible for enforcing safety protocol, training, and monitoring compliance.
- Reduced guest capacity.
- Responsible and required social distancing and use of PPE with face coverings being mandatory.
- Mandatory daily health screenings prior to embarkation and while onboard to include rapid results testing for all.
- Frequent unannounced inspections by U.S. government oversight agencies.
- To compensate for the burden the cruise corporations place on U.S. regulatory agencies, cruise corporations should be assessed additional federal income tax as well as fines for non-compliance and when necessary, denial of entry into U.S. ports.
- Improved ventilation and airflow systems.
- Improved medical facilities and equipment as well as an increase in the level of personnel certification and training.

Importantly, ICV also recommends that these must not be temporary measures allowed to fall by the wayside as soon as things are “back to normal.” Given the severe weaknesses in the industry’s current protocol for handling not only COVID-19, but other unrelated illnesses and passenger safety issues, in the coming months and years the public will require strict and stringent standards for future safety on cruise ships.

Given the history, experience, and knowledge ICV has indefatigably acquired by virtue of our work with victims, with Congress, and with the cruise lines themselves, we sought once again to do the work we are committed to doing, which is to help keep the cruising public safe, by writing to the CEOs of Royal Caribbean Cruise lines and Norwegian Cruise Lines to ask for a seat among the “Healthy Sail” panel members who were summoned to draft the safety guidelines for submission to the CDC. Having received no response at all, ICV has deep concerns, and so the public should as well, that there will be precious little oversight or accountability for the implementation of their submitted protocol. While the language used in the submissions might be detailed and appear to be comprehensive, a closer look could reveal a lack of bona fide intentions or the gravitas that should have accompanied them. No one should be willing to accept the measures the cruise lines submit without stepping back and taking a critical, in-depth look below the surface of their pacifying promises to see exactly what the cruise lines are fully committing to. A sharp eye will be required and a call to action by passengers, victims, and crew demanding a permanent increase in safety and security measures for cruise ships.