



March 23, 2022

Senator Marco Rubio
284 Russel Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

Senator Rick Scott
520 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington DC, 20510

Dear Senators Rubio and Scott,

On behalf of Global Business Travel Association (GBTA) and the South Florida, Tampa Bay and Central and North Florida chapters and our 226 members here, we are writing to express our strong support for the swift confirmation of Mr. Grant Harris to serve as Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis.

To start, we want to thank you for your continued leadership and support for the travel and tourism industry in Florida. As you know very well, tourism is the single most important economic driver in the state. The industry supported 1.6 million jobs and added \$96.5 billion to our state's GDP in 2019. That same year, tourism helped save every Florida household more than \$1,500 on state and local taxes. You were exactly right when you said, "These tourists support our small business, fuel our job growth and can help increase state investment in the environment, transportation, public safety and education."

In November 2021, after over a year's delay because of COVID-19, GBTA held its annual convention in Orlando. We had over 3,000 attendees from around the country and attendees from Europe, Latin America and Canada. The event proved to the business travel industry that with the right leadership and locations, such as the state of Florida, that meetings and travel could be successfully and safely conducted in the COVID pandemic.

We are proud of how hard our industry is working to recover and grow in the wake of COVID. However, there is a lot more to be done, and our success will require strong partnerships across the board.

On that note, we are very concerned that our industry is not currently represented at a senior level within the federal government. The Assistant Secretary of Commerce for Industry and Analysis, a position that has been vacant for over a year, is a vital link for us within the industry to have our interests represented as the government pursues policies and programs that affect the U.S. travel and

tourism industry. The Assistant Secretary oversees the National Travel and Tourism Office and works closely with Brand USA and industry to promote travel and tourism to the United States. The opportunity cost of this role continuing to be unfilled is quite high, especially as the government is creating a national strategy that will require Department of Commerce leadership and senior-level coordination with other departments and agencies to ensure effective implementation.

Mr. Harris has the right background and skills to be an effective Assistant Secretary, and we urge his quick confirmation. Half of his career has been in the private sector, which we value in someone who will be charged with seeking to prevent U.S. regulations and other programs from adversely impacting our industry's competitiveness. He also has senior-level government experience, which will make him effective in representing the needs and views of our industry to others within the government, and advancing the right tourism policy, strategy, and advocacy.

As a non-controversial nominee with an impressive background, we respectfully request your support in getting Mr. Harris confirmed and into the job as soon as possible so that he can be a partner to our industry in this critical time.

Sincerely,



Suzanne Neufang
CEO, GBTA



Shanna Gregg
President, Central North Florida Chapter



Alyssa Young
President, South Florida Chapter



Fabiano Laux
President, Tampa Bay Chapter