

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 12, 2020

Mr. Frank J. Del Rio
President and Chief Executive Officer
Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings Ltd.
7665 Corporate Center Drive
Miami, Florida 33126

Dear Mr. Del Rio:

We write to demand that Norwegian Cruise Line immediately end the dissemination of any misinformation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. We also strongly urge your company to consider suspending all operations until sufficient measures are in place to protect the health and safety of your passengers and crewmembers. Norwegian Cruise Line has a moral obligation to assure robust protections for consumers and to provide accurate information to all those traveling aboard its vessels.

Yesterday, disturbing reports indicated that some members of Norwegian's management asked sales staff to provide false information to customers regarding the COVID-19 pandemic in order to protect the company's bookings. One employee claimed that, "[t]hese discussions take place every day. And even during our department meetings, managers tell us that it isn't a big deal, that more people die from other things. [They're] constantly underestimating it."¹ More alarmingly, leaked e-mails reveal unconscionable aspects of Norwegian's business model – management offering sales team members with suggested talking points that are wholly inaccurate in order to help “close [...] guests that are on the fence.”² The suggested talking points go as far as to claim that COVID-19 “can only survive in cold temperatures, so the Caribbean is a fantastic choice for your next cruise” and that “[s]cientists and medical professionals have confirmed that the warm weather of the spring will be the end of the [c]oronavirus.”³ These claims are simply untrue, and – under the circumstances – dangerous to public health as “hundreds or thousands of people on a daily basis are potentially getting this false information.”⁴ In fact, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) is advising that U.S. travelers defer cruise ship travel altogether and has said, “COVID-19 appears to spread more easily between people in close quarters aboard ships.”⁵ Norwegian's prioritization

¹ Alexi Cardona, “Leaked Emails: Norwegian Pressures Sales Team to Mislead Potential Customers About Coronavirus,” *Miami New Times*, 11 March 2020, <https://www.miaminewtimes.com/news/coronavirus-norwegian-cruise-line-leaked-emails-show-booking-strategy-11590056>.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ Drew Harwell, “Norwegian Cruise Line managers urged salespeople to spread falsehoods about coronavirus,” *The Washington Post*, 12 March 2020, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/03/12/norwegian-cruise-line-managers-urged-salespeople-spread-falsehoods-about-coronavirus/>.

⁵ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, “COVID-10 and Cruise Ship Travel,” 8 March 2020, <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/page/covid-19-cruise-ship>.

of profits over people during this pandemic is truly appalling, and we demand that the company take action to cease all such behavior immediately.

In light of these reports, and for the sake of your passengers and crew, we urge the company to end all operations until it implements sufficient health and safety protections and protocols. Other major cruise lines have suspended all global operations due to the coronavirus, including Viking and Carnival Corporation's Princess Cruises.⁶ Travel aboard cruise ships at this time pose serious risks to passengers and crew. We caution you not to push the cost of any operational suspension onto your passengers, and Norwegian must provide consumers with existing reservations a full cash refund.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



EDWARD J. MARKEY
United States Senate

⁶ Michelle Gross, "Viking, Princess Suspends All Cruises Amid Covid-19 Pandemic," Forbes, 12 March 2020, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/michellegross/2020/03/12/viking-princess-suspends-all-cruises-amid-covid-19-pandemic/#132a98395a38>.