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(508) 875-2900<http://markey.house.gov>**Congress of the United States****House of Representatives****Washington, DC 20515-2107**

March 13, 2012

The Honorable Fred Upton, Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2183 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mary Bono Mack, Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Commerce, Manufacturing, and Trade  
104 Cannon House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Upton and Chairwoman Bono Mack:

As spring break approaches, many parents have family vacations planned in the weeks ahead. At the same time, high school and college students across America are looking forward to a break from school. While most vacations will be fun and relaxing, some of them may end in tragedy as a result of accidents and other unforeseen events. I have introduced H.R. 1120, the International Travelers Bill of Rights, which provides consumers with more information about the capabilities of overseas travel destinations to respond to emergencies so individuals can make better informed choices before finalizing their travel plans. H.R. 1120 has been endorsed by Consumer Action, Consumers Union, the National Association of Consumer Advocates, the National Consumers League, and US PIRG. With many Americans beginning to focus their attention on overseas travel at this time of the year, I am writing to request a hearing that will highlight the need for consumers to be fully informed of the risks of overseas travel.

Under current law, websites advertising travel destinations are not currently required to provide any information about health and safety risks or medical services available at overseas destinations. Such websites are also not required to post comments from consumers who have experienced unsafe conditions at their destination. Tragically, Americans have died at destinations with unsafe facilities that lacked staff trained in first aid or emergency response, including cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR), when adequate resources or trained personnel could have prevented such deaths.

The International Travelers Bill of Rights Act would require travel services websites to provide their customers with easily accessible and clearly worded health and safety information. Posted information would include State Department travel warnings and travel alerts and whether a destination employs physicians or nurses, other personnel trained in CPR, or lifeguards.

While no guarantee can be made about the absolute safety of any travel destination, travel destinations should provide more information so that families and individuals can make more

informed choices. Families who have lost loved ones to preventable tragedies overseas have told me that had they known the dangers, their loved ones might still be alive today.

Maureen Webster, a constituent from Woburn, Massachusetts in my Congressional district, lost her son 22-year old son Nolan while he vacationed in Cancun, Mexico in 2007.<sup>1</sup> The trip was a college graduation gift from his parents. After hotel guests pulled Nolan from a swimming pool while he was unconscious, witnesses reported there were no lifeguards and none of the hotel staff at the scene knew CPR. The resort doctor refused to treat Nolan, and it took 30 minutes for an ambulance to arrive. By that time it was too late.

John Van Hoy, Jr., of Liberty, Missouri, died in the Bahamas, pulled under water by the suction of a whirlpool hot tub that was not in accordance with safety standards that have been implemented in the United States. After John was removed from the water, his fiancée found that the hotel had no staff members who were able or willing to perform CPR. John lay by the edge of the pool for 45 minutes before an ambulance finally arrived, too late to save his life.<sup>2</sup>

Nancy Midlock of Illinois lost her eight year-old son Brent in 2003 when he was sucked into a drainage pipe in a swimming pool at a Mexican resort. The four-foot deep pool, which was promoted as a pool for snorkeling, had no lifeguards and there were no employees located near the pool.

Sadly, these tragic stories are not isolated incidents. In the first six months of 2011 alone, 135 Americans died of non-natural causes in the popular vacation countries of Mexico, China, Thailand, and the United Kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

International travel can offer wonderful entertainment and educational opportunities. However, in some cases Americans are severely injured or killed as a result of unsafe facilities abroad. With the spring break travel season upon us, I request that you hold a hearing to investigate consumer protection issues related to the online travel industry with an aim towards improving consumer awareness of the risks of international travel and the tools to better manage them. Thank you for giving this request due consideration.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey

cc: The Honorable Henry A. Waxman  
The Honorable G.K. Butterfield

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<sup>1</sup> "Victims' families lobby for medical transparency at Mexican resorts", *USA Today*, March 29, 2011

<sup>2</sup> "Sandals sued for negligence over tragedy", *The Tribune*, May 18, 2011

<sup>3</sup> U.S. State Department website: Death of U.S. Citizens Abroad by Non-Natural Causes