

February 6, 2026

Dear Mayor Mitchell,

Thank you for your continued investments in Downtown New Bedford, your commitment to cultural tourism has positioned our city for a bright future.

We were all surprised by the decision of the American Cruise Line (ACL) to eliminate New Bedford as a stop for their 2026 season. Given the time sensitive nature of this challenge, we are writing as a collective of concerned business owners and non-profit leaders to offer our support of your efforts to solve this pressing issue.

As background, when we learned that the State Pier repair schedule could impact American Cruise Lines' (ACL) ability to dock in New Bedford, our cultural institutions and local businesses came together last fall to seek solutions with ACL. We met on numerous occasions and were hopeful that an equitable solution could be reached. We are grateful for the partnership of the City, particularly Gordon Carr and the Port Authority team, whose sustained efforts over the past three months focused on identifying a viable alternative docking location for ACL for the upcoming season.

Unfortunately, ACL's decision will have a direct financial impact on many downtown businesses and non-profits. In 2025, ACL brought more than 3,000 visitors to the Seaport Cultural District, generating at least an estimated \$200,000 in direct revenue for New Bedford's cultural institutions and downtown businesses.

This included:

- Approximately \$35,000 for the New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center - nearly 10% of its annual operating budget.
- More than \$10,000 each for the New Bedford Art Museum and The New Bedford Museum of Glass.
- Approximately \$50,000 in revenue for Servedwell Hospitality's Harbor Tour operations, representing roughly half of their business.
- More than \$50,000 in revenue for the New Bedford Whaling Museum.
- Consistent visitation to the Seamen's Bethel, New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park Visitor Center, and numerous downtown restaurants and retailers.
- Beyond the immediate economic benefits, these 3,000 visitors serve as enthusiastic ambassadors for our city, helping elevate national awareness of New Bedford's cultural assets, history, and small businesses.

While it may now be too late to preserve ACL's 2026 season in New Bedford, we want to reaffirm our willingness to collaborate with the City, the Commonwealth and American Cruise Lines to establish a sustainable, long-term solution that will support the return of the cruise line in 2027.

Our collective will be meeting on Tuesday, February 10 at the Whaling Museum, and we would welcome your input before, at or following this conversation. Like you, we believe collaboration strengthens the vitality of our downtown and the institutions and businesses that depend on cultural tourism.

Thank you for your continued dedication to strengthening New Bedford's cultural and economic community. We look forward to continued partnership with the City as we work to address this challenge. We stand with you and are ready to assist in next steps.

Sincerely,



Laura Orleans, Executive Director
New Bedford Fishing Heritage Center



Suzanne deVegh
Executive Director, New Bedford Art Museum



Stephen Silverstein, Owner
Servedwell Hospitality



Kirk J. Nelson, Executive Director
The New Bedford Museum of Glass



Amanda McMullen, President and CEO
New Bedford Whaling Museum



Chrisanne Tyrell, Executive Director
Southeastern Mass Visitors Bureau



Anthi Frangiadis, Business Owner
The Drawing Room



Phil Oliveira, President,
New Bedford Port Society

CC:

Senator Mark Montigny
Representative Antonio Cabral
Representative Chris Hendricks
Representative Christopher Markey
Representative Mark Sylvia
Representative Steve Ouellette
NBEDC President, Anthony R. Sapienza
NBEDC Executive, Director Derek Santos
NBEDC Director, Creative Strategies | Arts-based
Initiatives Margo Saulnier

New Bedford Port Authority Executive Director,
Gordon Carr
New Bedford Port Authority General Counsel,
Blair Bailey
Explore New Bedford Director of Tourism &
Marketing, Ashley Payne
Explore New Bedford Marketing Manager, Amy
Desrosiers