Dear Skål Members,

I respectfully ask for your support and vote for re-election to the **Skål International USA Executive Board as Vice President in 2027**.

Serving Skål USA over the past two years has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career. As **Director of Finance in 2026** and **Director of Social Media and Marketing in 2025**, I have had the privilege of working alongside dedicated leaders who share a commitment to strengthening our organization and creating value for every member. These experiences have reinforced my passion for Skål and my belief that our best days are still ahead.

My commitment to Skål extends far beyond the national level. For more than eleven years, I have proudly served on the **Skål International Boston Board of Directors**, including as President in 2024. During that time, I have witnessed firsthand the power of member engagement, leadership development, and industry collaboration. Today, Skål Boston continues to be the largest club in the United States and the fourth largest in the world, serving as a model for growth, innovation, and member participation. Additionally, my attendance at Skål North American Skål Congress (NASC) in 2024, 2025, and 2026, as well as the Skål International World Congress in 2024 and 2025, has strengthened my leadership abilities and broadened my perspective on the future of our organization. These experiences provided valuable opportunities to learn from past Skål International World Presidents, national Skål leaders, and other distinguished Skål executives from around the world, insights that I have brought back to help support and advance the mission of Skål USA.

As **Skål International USA Director of Finance**, I focused on bringing a disciplined and strategic approach to our financial planning. Working collaboratively with the Executive Board, we reduced our projected budget deficit from approximately **$39,000 to a forecasted $22,000**, strengthening the organization's financial outlook while continuing to support programs and initiatives that benefit our membership. This achievement was not the result of cutting corners, but rather thoughtful stewardship, accountability, and a commitment to ensuring the long-term sustainability of Skål USA.

As **Skål International USA Director of Social Media & Marketing**, I partnered with fellow board member Simeon Miranda to elevate the visibility of Skål USA and provide additional resources to our local clubs. One of our most successful initiatives was the hiring of Ashley Field as Social Media Specialist, a strategic investment that proved highly beneficial for the organization. Through her leadership and expertise, our social media platforms received overwhelmingly positive engagement and responses, demonstrating the value of investing in the people, tools, and resources that empower our members and clubs to succeed. In addition, we implemented professional social media support available to clubs across the country, helping enhance engagement, increase awareness, strengthen communication, and elevate the overall presence of Skål USA at every level of the organization.

Throughout my years of service, one principle has guided my leadership: **leadership is not about holding a position, it is about creating opportunities for others to grow and succeed**. Whether mentoring future hospitality leaders, supporting local club initiatives, or helping shape national strategies, I have always believed that our greatest responsibility is to leave Skål stronger than we found it.

I am proud to bring more than twenty years of experience in the travel and tourism industry to my service within Skål. From beginning my career as a Catering Sales Manager in Fort Lauderdale to my current role as **Regional Director of Sales & Marketing**, I have built my career on relationship-building, strategic thinking, team development, and delivering measurable results.

I have been fortunate to receive recognition including the **Highgate Top Performing Sales Team Award**, **Highgate Top Performing Director of Sales & Marketing Award**, and the **Massachusetts Lodging Association Manager of the Year Award**. I currently serve on the **PCMA New England Board of Directors**, where I will serve as President in 2028, and continue to support the industry through leadership roles with the **Massachusetts Lodging Association** and **Boston University School of Hospitality** mentorship programs for future hospitality professionals.

The future of Skål depends on strong leadership, financial responsibility, meaningful member engagement, and a commitment to developing the next generation of industry professionals. I am ready to continue that work.

I humbly ask for your vote and the opportunity to continue serving as a **Vice President in 2027 Skål USA Executive Board**. If re-elected, I will continue to lead with integrity, professionalism, transparency, and an unwavering commitment to the values that unite us: **friendship, leadership, networking, and collaboration within the global travel and tourism industry.**

Together, we can continue building a stronger, more engaged, and more financially sustainable Skål USA for future generations.

Skål,

Efren Aponte
2026 Skål USA Director of Finance
2025 Skål USA Director of Social Media & Marketing
2024 President, Skål International Boston
2028 PCMA New England President-Elect