

February 21, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Senate Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member  
Senate Commerce, Science, and  
Transportation Committee  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Chairman  
House Transportation and Infrastructure  
Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
House Transportation and Infrastructure  
Committee  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, Chairman Graves, and Ranking Member Larsen,

The undersigned organizations write to express support for provisions focused on improving the air travel experience of passengers with disabilities in H.R. 3935, the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act, and S. 1939, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2023. We appreciate the inclusion of a number of provisions focused on improving the safety and dignity of the air travel experience for people with disabilities, including disabled veterans, and hope they will be included in the final FAA Reauthorization bill.

Despite a focus on passengers with disabilities in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (P.L. 115-254), the air travel experience of passengers with disabilities has not improved. Instead, it is often frustrating and is at worst unsafe. In 2022, the most recent year for which statistics are available, passengers filed a little over 42,300 disability-related complaints directly with over 180 foreign and domestic airlines, which was an increase of nearly 15 percent over 2018. Congress must take more decisive action to improve the safety of air travel for passengers with disabilities.

We are pleased that both the House and Senate versions of the new FAA Reauthorization include several sections focused on the problems people with disabilities frequently encounter when traveling by air. Some of these provisions include training requirements for assisting passengers with limited mobility and properly stowing assistive devices; analyzing and improving the Department of Transportation's (DOT) complaint process; addressing the need for more access standards and accessibility of inflight entertainment, as well as improved access to airline websites, applications, and information communication technologies; and increasing access to seating accommodations. The bill also requires continued study into safe and secure in-cabin wheelchair tie-down systems; and for DOT to perform a more in-depth analysis of mishandled wheelchairs as reported by airlines. Additionally, the legislation reauthorizes the Air Carrier

Access Act Advisory Committee, increases disability representation on passenger experience committees, and focuses on the needs of passengers with disabilities in evacuations.

We also support several provisions included in only one chamber's bill. Specifically, we support S. 1939's inclusion of a pilot grant program to increase airport accessibility, new requirements and training related to onboard wheelchairs, expansion of the Advanced Materials Center of Excellence to address safe and accessible air travel for passengers with disabilities, and the creation of a known service animal pilot program. We are also pleased that H.R. 3935 includes a provision focused on ensuring access for assistive devices powered by lithium-ion batteries.

Thank you for ensuring that the final version of the FAA Reauthorization Act includes these important provisions addressing the needs of air travelers with disabilities. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Ansley, Chief Policy Officer, Paralyzed Veterans of America, at 202-416-7794 or by email at [HeatherA@PVA.org](mailto:HeatherA@PVA.org).

Sincerely,

Access Living  
American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Council of the Blind  
Blinded Veterans Association  
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation  
Cure SMA  
Disability Rights Education and Defense Fund (DREDF)  
Easterseals  
Epilepsy Foundation  
Hearing Loss Association of America  
The Honorable Jim Langevin  
I AM ALS  
Muscular Dystrophy Association  
National Association of the Deaf  
National Council on Independent Living  
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
Parent Project Muscular Dystrophy  
United Spinal Association  
Wounded Warrior Project