

February 24, 2023

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

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

RE: Good Jobs for Good Airports Act – 2023 FAA Reauthorization Proposal

Dear Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz and Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation:

On behalf of the more than 3 million members of the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), UNITE HERE (UH) and the Communications Workers of America (CWA), we write to urge you to include the Good Jobs for Good Airports Act as part of the upcoming 2023 FAA Reauthorization, on which your committee has begun work.

The FAA Reauthorization is one of the most consequential policy making opportunities in front of us in 2023. That is because airports connect people worldwide and power our global economy. And it is working people who show up at our nation’s airports every single day to make it all possible.

Our members include service industry workers in states from coast to coast: frontline workers who have shown up to perform essential jobs, often at great personal cost for low wages and with few protections. This includes airport service workers – a workforce that is most often powered by Black, brown and immigrant workers – who keep our airports safe, clean and running through their jobs as cleaners, baggage handlers, security officers, wheelchair attendants, concession workers, passenger services agents, ramp and cargo workers. These workers – from the curb to the cabin – are uniting and demanding to be respected, protected and paid livable wages with healthcare and paid time off.

It is evident that our air travel industry is in crisis. Travelers and workers alike are contending with airlines canceling flights in record numbers, mountains of lost luggage piling up at airports and system-wide outages. Even United Airlines CEO, Scott Kirby, recently admitted that the industry is “stressed to the max” as a number of airlines cannot fly their schedules, leaving customers paying the price.

With action from this committee, we firmly believe that Congress can help rebuild our nation’s aviation system to keep our airports safe and travelers on time. By ensuring good paying jobs, we can help stabilize and empower the workforce that helps power our air travel system. Together we can make this a reality.

We know that when members of Congress, including those on this committee, listen to working people and take action, we can achieve strong results together. The bipartisan CARES Act – which included dedicated funding so that not only workers directly employed by airlines, but

also those employed by airport contractors could keep their jobs – is just one example. We also know that Congress needs to do more to make sure that every job within publicly-funded airports is a good job that supports working families. Frontline airport service workers risked their health to show up at our airports even though they were underpaid and often lacked basic health benefits or paid time off despite the daily risks they take to serve the traveling public.

Furthermore, while total passenger numbers have increased, aviation employment has dropped, as airlines cut many frontline airport occupations. At the same time, many airport service workers' wages have not changed in nearly 20 years,¹ even as inflation reached a record high in 2022. That means larger-than-ever workloads, experienced staff leaving the industry for better-paying jobs and few incentives to bring new people into the workforce. This is a dangerous combination that threatens the safety of our airports not only for workers, but also for travelers.

We believe an efficient 21st century national air travel system starts with an empowered, well-paid, trained and stable workforce within our airports. Airlines must invest in the workers who do difficult, yet often disregarded work, including caring for passengers who need wheelchair assistance to make travel accessible, cleaning planes and doing security sweeps of the cabin in under 10 minutes and securing the terminals with insufficient staffing and no breaks. Congress has invested billions in our airports and air travel infrastructure, and now it is up to your committee and colleagues in the U.S. Senate to help ensure our nation is properly supporting an airport service workforce that is ready to address any and all potential hazards or emergencies.

As we move forward with both the 2023 FAA Reauthorization process and the implementation of the 2021 Bipartisan Infrastructure Law, we look forward to working with the Committee to produce a national policy that ensures public resources are invested to make our airports infrastructure safer, more secure and equitable for all.

Together, our organizations are advocating for a legislative proposal that Senator Ed Markey and Representative Chuy García will soon introduce, the Good Jobs for Good Airports Act. This proposal would establish a national wage and benefits standard for airport service workers at major airports that receive federal funding. The measure will ensure that public dollars serve the public good and that every airport service job is a good job that puts workers on a path to a livable wage, while reducing turnover and leading to a better trained, more resilient workforce. Any person working at our nation's airports, vital infrastructure funded significantly by federal dollars, should be able to support themselves and their families – and the Good Jobs for Good Airports Act has the power to transform workers' lives. It can help ensure every worker has a fair shot at a good life, with the pay and benefits they need to thrive. Critically, this commonsense solution would also help address the deep gender and racial inequities that exist within airports, as women workers and workers of color often hold the lowest-paid jobs, have the fewest benefits and are currently most impacted by airlines' failure to ensure fairness and dignity on the job.

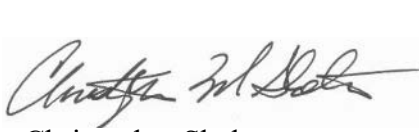
As airport service workers play a vital role in maintaining our airports and keeping our air travel infrastructure operational and safe, Congress must take steps in the 2023 FAA Reauthorization to ensure that any further federal investments in the aviation sector benefit these workers, not just corporations. We urge your committee to enforce strong job standards requirements for all

¹ Wage data gathered from the U.S. Bureau of Labor of Statistics.

airport service workers by including the Good Jobs for Good Airports Act as part of the FAA Reauthorization.

Nationwide, our members are backing this important legislation and will continue to take public action, mobilizing their workplaces and communities, to ensure their demands for living wages and benefits are heard. We look forward to ongoing engagement with you throughout the 2023 FAA Reauthorization process to build a stronger economy and more resilient air travel industry future.

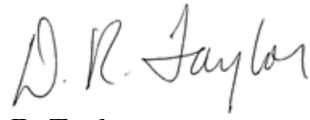
Sincerely,



Christopher Shelton
CWA President



Mary Kay Henry
SEIU International President



D. Taylor
UNITE HERE President

