

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

November 17, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

Secretary Duffy:

We write in opposition to your decision not to enforce key provisions of the Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs regulations.¹ We urge the Administration to reverse course and uphold these essential consumer protections.

These standards ensure that passengers with disabilities can travel safely and with dignity. While progress has been made since both the passage of the *Americans with Disabilities Act* and the *Air Carrier Access Act* decades ago, there is still a long road ahead to eliminate barriers and make air travel more accessible for travelers with disabilities. In the last few years, we have seen too many instances of the mishandling of wheelchairs. Recent reports found that airlines damaged or lost more than 11,000 passenger wheelchairs between 2023 and 2024.² And this is not just a number on a page – losing access to a wheelchair or assistive device can have harmful impacts on a person’s mobility, livelihood and independence.

Issued in December 2024, in alignment with the requirements of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization law, the Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs rule included common sense provisions that keep passengers with wheelchairs safe and improve the accessibility of air travel.³ For example, the rule requires airlines to promptly return checked wheelchairs or other assistive devices in the same condition as when they are dropped off. In addition, airlines must notify passengers whose wheelchairs have been mishandled, as well as provide loaner chairs, and quickly repair or replace the damaged devices. The rule also requires airlines to reimburse passengers for transportation costs incurred as a result of a passenger’s wheelchair being delayed by the airline.

However, instead of working to uphold the strong protections in the December 2024 rule, this Administration has decided to significantly delay its enforcement.⁴ According to a recent notice in the Federal Register, the Administration now plans to reevaluate key provisions including the ability to hold airlines accountable for damaged or delayed wheelchairs and reimbursement for passengers when an aircraft cannot accommodate their assistive device and they are forced to rebook—among other requirements.⁵ More than 5.5 million Americans depend on mobility devices for their daily lives. These devices are expensive with prices ranging into tens of thousands of dollars depending on the complexity of the device.

When families book plane tickets, they expect to get where they’re going safely, on time and at a reasonable cost. Passengers with disabilities have so much more to consider as they travel and we must do what we can to make their travel as seamless as possible. The choice to not enforce the critical elements of the 2024 wheelchair rule, in addition to

¹ David Shepardson, *US will not enforce Biden wheelchair passenger protection rule*, REUTERS, (Sept. 29, 2025), available at: <https://www.reuters.com/world/usdot-will-not-enforce-biden-wheelchair-passenger-protection-rule-2025-09-29/>.

² Gregory Wallace, *Feds propose steep fines when airlines damage wheelchairs*, CNN, (Feb. 29, 2024), available at: <https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/29/travel/airlines-wheelchair-damage-fines-dot>.

³ U.S. Department of Transportation, *Secretary Buttigieg Announces Sweeping Protections for Airline Passengers with Disabilities*, (Dec. 16, 2024), available at: <https://www.transportation.gov/briefing-room/secretary-buttigieg-announces-sweeping-protections-airline-passengers-disabilities>.

⁴ Sam Ogozalek, *New airline wheelchair handling rule coming, as DOT pauses part of Biden-era regulation*, POLITICOPRO, (Sept. 29, 2025), available at: <https://subscriber.politicopro.com/article/2025/09/new-airline-wheelchair-handling-rule-coming-as-dot-pauses-part-of-biden-era-regulation-00584405>

⁵ *Id.*

the decision by the Administration to roll back consumer protections requiring airlines to compensate passengers when flight disruptions are caused by air carriers, creates an environment that is not friendly to all travelers. Furthermore it adds undue burden on air travelers with disabilities.

These consumer protections to help the traveling public have gone through public comment and will ensure the safety of families in our districts. We strongly urge the Department to reverse course and fully enforce the Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs rule without delay. We look forward to your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Greg Stanton
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure



Andre Carson
Member of Congress



Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



Patrick Ryan
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress



Jared Huffman
Member of Congress



John Garamendi
Member of Congress



Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



Valerie P. Foushee
Member of Congress