

May 4, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Duffy:

The undersigned organizations write to respectfully request updates on the status of several disability-related provisions in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization of 2024 (Act) (P.L. 118-63) and encourage further actions. The bipartisan law included several measures that would make improvements to the air travel experience for people with disabilities. We reiterate our support for the accessibility provisions included in the FAA Reauthorization Act and believe it is a significant step forward in the Department of Transportation's (Department) efforts to improve the safety and dignity of the air travel experience for passengers with disabilities. However, the FAA Reauthorization Act was signed into law nearly two years ago and several deadlines imposed by Congress have yet to be met. We respectfully request updates as to the status of the Department's implementation of the disability-related provisions in this critical law and urge the Department to meet the requirements specified by Congress to ensure the safety and dignity of passengers with disabilities in air travel.

Section 541 of the Act reauthorized the Air Carrier Access Act Advisory Committee (ACAA Advisory Committee). However, since the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, the first time the committee was authorized, only one committee has submitted a final report to the Secretary with recommendations to improve the safety of passengers with disabilities. This matters to the disability community because the ACAA Advisory Committee is the only congressionally mandated body responsible for identifying access barriers in air travel and recommending solutions to the Secretary of Transportation. With only one report ever completed since its initial authorization in 2018, it is imperative that a new committee be empaneled as soon as possible to continue with these recommendations and other instructions from Congress.

Sections 542 and 543 address improved training standards for air carrier personnel who assist passengers who use wheelchairs with boarding and deplaning and for personnel who stow wheelchairs and scooters. We thank the Department for acting early and finalizing the Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs (DOT-OST-2022-0144) rule in 2024. We support the rule's requirements as finalized, especially the improved training standards. Many wheelchair users sustain bodily harm during transfers between their wheelchairs and aircraft seats, and/or endure significant, and sometimes irreparable damage to their expensive and medically sophisticated wheelchairs or mobility devices. We believe improved training standards will reduce these occurrences. Importantly, the final rule requires the air carriers to meet the initial improved training requirements by June 17, 2026. We urge the Department to uphold the rule's provisions and ensure carriers implement the new training standards in accordance with the rule's requirements.

Section 544 directs the Department, no later than one year after the date of enactment of the Act, to annually evaluate enhanced data on the mishandling of wheelchairs on aircraft, publish the findings, and submit a report to Congress upon the completion of each evaluation. Furthermore, Section 544 also requires the Secretary to submit a publicly available roadmap to Congress on how the Department and the U.S. Access Board will establish a research program and sponsor studies that assess issues and considerations of the feasibility of in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems. As part of this work, we respectfully request that the Department and the U.S. Access Board seek stakeholder expertise, including input based on completed and current crash test studies on in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems, to ensure the roadmap and related studies reflect the full scope of available evidence. We respectfully request status updates on these requirements.

Furthermore, Section 545 requires the Department to submit a publicly available annual report to Congress on aviation consumer complaints related to passengers with disabilities filed with the Department. To the best of our knowledge, no reports with the enhanced data requirements are publicly available. We respectfully request a status update on when the report will be published.

Section 546 instructs the Department to issue an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) on seating accommodations for any qualified individual with a disability within 180 days after the enactment of the Act. The ANPRM has not been issued and is long overdue. We urge the Department to move forward with the publication of an ANPRM on seating accommodations.

Section 546 also requires the Department to establish a five-year known service animal travel pilot program to allow approved service animals to be exempt from the documentation requirements with respect to air travel and issue guidance regarding improvements to training for airline personnel and contractors in recognizing when a qualified individual with a disability is traveling with a service animal. However, we have no information regarding the status of the pilot program.

Section 547 directs the Department, within two years after enactment of the Act and in consultation with the Access Board, to issue regulations to establish minimum standards to ensure that individuals with disabilities can access customer focused kiosks, software applications, and websites. The section also requires the ACAA Advisory Committee to periodically review and make recommendations regarding the accessibility of these technologies. We enthusiastically support efforts to increase technological accessibility and urge the Department to comply with this requirement.

Section 548 requires the Department, within one year after the passage of the Act, to issue an ANPRM regarding standards to ensure the aircraft boarding and deplaning process is accessible for passengers with disabilities. This must include standards for aisle chairs and the use of mechanical lift devices. One Paralyzed Veterans of America member recently experienced issues with an air carrier that is now using newly designed aisle chairs. With the carrier's past aisle chair design, he was able to self-transfer from his personal wheelchair onto the aisle chair and then passenger seat. However, the new aisle chair design prohibits him from doing so and he has been nearly dropped on more than one recent transfer. With the high number of occurrences

where passengers are dropped or injured during aisle chair transfers, this member must now subject himself to possible injury. It is of the utmost importance that standards be set on aisle chairs and the use of mechanical lift devices to reduce passenger anxiety and harm.

The final report of the first ACAA Advisory Committee included a recommendation for the Department and FAA to lead a study related to boarding and deplaning equipment. An Assistance Subcommittee determined that aisle chair transfers could be safer if improvements were made to the design of aisle chairs and discussed aisle chair alternatives that may provide a better way to transfer passengers with mobility disabilities from their wheelchairs to aircraft passenger seats. In February 2026, the Department informed advocates that no action has been taken on this recommendation. We urge the Department to move forward with the publication of an ANPRM on boarding and deplaning processes, including aisle chair designs and the use of mechanical lifts as required by Congress.

In addition, Section 548 instructed the Department to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) on accessible in-flight entertainment within one year of the enactment of the Act. However, despite the passage of time, no NPRM has been published. We respectfully request the Department advance an NPRM on accessible in-flight entertainment. Furthermore, the section instructed the ACAA Advisory Committee to examine technical solutions and the feasibility of visually tactilely accessible onboard announcements. We reiterate the need for the reauthorized ACAA Advisory Committee to examine these solutions.

Section 549 of the Act directed the Department to investigate disability-related complaints within 120 days of receiving the filing. Since the enactment of the Act, the Department has taken substantial steps to improve its review timeline of such complaints, including the rollout of the Aviation Complaint, Enforcement, and Reporting System. We applaud the Department on its efforts and encourage the Department to continue with improvements to reduce the timeline for review.

The Department must continue to act on the requirements in the FAA Reauthorization Act to improve the air travel experience of passengers with disabilities and their families. The undersigned organizations continue to advocate for and support the disability-related provisions included in the Act. We applaud all steps the Department has taken so far and encourage the Department to continue with its achievements.

Overall, we appreciate the Department's efforts to improve the safety of air travel for all Americans. We want to make sure these actions continue for passengers with disabilities and would like to work together with the Department. Please have a member of your staff contact Heather Ansley, Chief Policy Officer, Paralyzed Veterans of America, at 202-416-7794 or by email at HeatherA@PVA.org if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Access Living
All Wheels Up
ALS Association

ALS Network
ALS United
American Association of People with Disabilities
American Council of the Blind
Blinded Veterans Association (BVA)
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Cure SMA
Deaf Equality
Disability Rights California
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Easterseals, Inc.
Guide Dogs for the Blind
Hearing Loss Association of America
Muscular Dystrophy Association
National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network (NDRN)
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
Service Employees International Union
The Arc of the United States
The Seeing Eye, Inc.
United Spinal Association
Wounded Warrior Project