

April 20, 2018

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee
2165 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster,

The undersigned organizations write to express support for Sections 441, 442, and 443 in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (H.R. 4). These provisions represent an important step toward addressing the barriers people with disabilities, including veterans with disabilities, experience in air travel.

The Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) prohibits disability-based discrimination in air travel. Although the ACAA improved the air travel experience for passengers with disabilities, damaged assistance devices, lack of seating accommodations, inaccessible communications, and inadequate assistance continue to create barriers to traveling by air for employment, health care, recreation, and other opportunities. In 2016, passengers filed 32,445 disability-related complaints as reported by 184 domestic and foreign air carriers, which represents a nearly five percent increase over 2015. To ensure that people with disabilities are able to better access air travel, reforms are needed.

We are pleased that the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 includes sections that target the concerns of air passengers with disabilities. We believe that Section 441's establishment of a Select Subcommittee for Aviation Consumers with Disabilities to the Advisory Committee for Aviation Consumer Protection will lead to advancements in ACAA implementation that improve the air travel experience for people with disabilities. In addition, the study required in Section 442 will illuminate areas for improvement and result in increased airport accessibility and training of air carrier and contract personnel. Lastly, we believe that Section 443's requirement for the U.S. Access Board and the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to investigate the feasibility of in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems for people with disabilities represents a critical step forward in efforts to improve access for individuals with mobility impairments.

Although not included in the current bill, we appreciate your intent to offer an amendment that includes additional disability-related provisions. These provisions include an airline passengers with disabilities bill of rights, increased civil penalties for harm to passengers with disabilities, and language directing DOT to revise its service animal regulation and to consider specific concerns in promulgating that rule.

Thank you for including provisions about the air travel needs of passengers with disabilities in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018. We hope to continue work with the Committee on addressing disability-related barriers in air travel. If you have any questions, please contact

Heather Ansley, Acting Associate Executive Director of Government Relations with Paralyzed Veterans of America, at 202-416-7794 or by email at heathera@pva.org.

Sincerely,

American Association of People with Disabilities
The Arc of the United States
Autistic Self Advocacy Network
Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law
Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund (DREDF)
Easterseals
Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA)
National Association of the Deaf
The National Council on Independent Living
National Disability Rights Network
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
Paralyzed Veterans of America
United Spinal Association