

June 26, 2017

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 thank you for including Sections 541, 542, and 543 in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Aviation Innovation, Reform, and Reauthorization (AIRR) Act. These provisions represent a first 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, recreational, and other opportunities. In 2015, passengers filed 30,830 disability-related complaints as reported by 176 domestic and foreign air carriers, which represents a nearly twelve percent increase over 2014. To ensure that people with disabilities are able to better access air travel, reforms are needed.

We are pleased that the 21<sup>st</sup> Century AIRR Act includes three sections that target the concerns of air passengers with disabilities. We believe that Section 541'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 542 will illuminate areas for improvement and result in increased airport accessibility and training of air carrier and contract personnel. Lastly, we believe that Section 543's requirement for the U.S. Access Board and the U.S. Department of Transportation 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.

Thank you for including provisions about the air travel needs of passengers with disabilities in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century AIRR Act. We hope to work with the Committee on additional provisions that would further address disability-related barriers in air travel. If you have any questions, please contact Heather Ansley, Associate General Counsel for Corporate and Government Relations with Paralyzed Veterans of America, at 202-416-7794 or by email at [heathera@pva.org](mailto:heathera@pva.org).

Sincerely,

American Association of People with Disabilities  
American Council of the Blind

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  
National Disability Rights Network  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Multiple Sclerosis Society  
Paralyzed Veterans of America  
The Arc of the United States  
The National Council on Independent Living  
United Spinal Association