

BERNARD SANDERS
VERMONT

COMMITTEES:
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ENERGY AND NATURAL RESOURCES
ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS
HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4504

332 DIRKSEN SENATE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510
(202) 224-5141

1 CHURCH STREET, 3RD FLOOR
BURLINGTON, VT 05401
(802) 862-0697
1 (800) 339-9834

July 02, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Stephen Dickson
Administrator
U.S. Department of Transportation
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Dickson:

As COVID-19 cases in the United States reach new record highs, the recent announcement from American Airlines that it would resume filling its planes to capacity reveals a stunning lack of federal government action to protect passengers, flight attendants, pilots, and other aviation workers. At a Tuesday, June 30th hearing held by the Senate Committee of Health Education, Labor, and Pensions, both Dr. Anthony Fauci and CDC Director Redfield expressed “concern” and “disappointment” at the announcement by American Airlines to fill their planes to capacity.

Today, I am writing to urge the Department of Transportation and the Federal Aviation Administration to take immediate action to mandate that airlines protect passengers and employees and put safety over profit.

There is universal agreement among scientists and medical experts that social distancing and mask wearing are the two most important and effective tools we have to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and save lives. Yet across the industry, airline policies on mask-wearing and social distancing have been inconsistent, incomplete, and unenforced. This is unacceptable and is endangering the health and safety of airline passengers and workers.

As the government’s top officials in charge of airline passenger safety, I request that you implement the following mandatory safety regulations, in addition to any others recommended by medical experts:

- Require masks or face coverings for passengers and workers in all airports and airplanes, with very limited exceptions. Airlines and airport authorities must also provide the

resources and employee training to clearly inform passengers of this policy, and the legal authority to enforce it.

- Limit the maximum capacity of passengers on flights to 67% of available seats.
- Require airlines and airports to meet cleaning standards to disinfect, or sanitize, per appropriate CDC guidance.
- Require airlines to meet standards for air circulation and filtration, per appropriate CDC guidance.

Given the continued threat of COVID-19 to the traveling public, I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Bernard Sanders". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "B".

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator