

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 8, 2021

The Honorable Stephen M. Dickson  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20591

Mr. Darby LaJoye  
Acting Administrator  
Transportation Security Administration  
6595 Springfield Center Dr.  
Springfield, VA 22150

Dear Administrator Dickson and Acting Administrator LaJoye:

We write to applaud your recent actions to implement President Biden's Executive Order on Promoting COVID-19 Safety in Domestic and International Travel and to strongly encourage your agencies to work in coordination with U.S. air carriers to robustly communicate and enforce this Order, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidance, and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) National Emergency determination moving forward.

The Federal mask mandate for travelers within the United States during the COVID-19 pandemic was long overdue. The refusal by the previous administration to issue this commonsense requirement to mitigate the spread of this disease led to preventable infections and deaths. While we are pleased this Order and CDC's subsequent guidance are now in effect, it is critical that your agencies, working in conjunction with air carriers and airports, make a robust effort to inform airline passengers of the mandate and mask standards and enforce compliance.

The Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and its Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) are essential to combatting this public health emergency through thorough enforcement of this face mask mandate. TSA's recently announced security directives and recommended fine levels will help with this job. We expect that TSOs will deny passage through the screening checkpoint to all travelers refusing to wear masks and that fines will be levied in appropriate situations. For those passengers wearing non-compliant masks, TSA should take steps to ensure passengers are made aware of their non-compliance and be given alternative masks. For those passengers unwilling or unable to use a compliant mask, TSA must deny their admittance through the checkpoint unless one of the very limited exceptions to the order applies. TSA must ensure such exceptions are strictly enforced and do not become widely-used loopholes. TSA must also ensure robust communication of the mask mandate with stakeholders and passengers in other transportation modes, including passenger rail, mass transit, and buses.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) should work with all U.S. air carriers to ensure they are appropriately messaging about the new face mask Order as well. This not only means informing passengers about the Order, but, more specifically, about the types of masks necessary to fulfill the requirement of the Order. Robust and proactive communication from air carriers – including during the ticket purchasing and flight check-in processes – will reduce the number of passengers that show up to TSA screening checkpoints and gates to board airplanes with non-compliant masks

or mistakenly believing they are exempt from requirements. This will ultimately reduce the strain on TSOs, airline crewmembers, gate agents, and customer service employees, who have been put in tense or uncomfortable positions enforcing airline mask policies over the past several months.

Your agencies have already worked in close coordination with industry stakeholders and relevant Federal partners throughout this pandemic. We believe that continued robust coordination, enhanced communication with passengers, and decisive enforcement action will help mitigate the spread of this insidious disease and ensure the safety of passengers and frontline aviation and transportation security workers.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to continuing to work with you on this essential endeavor.

Sincerely,



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PETER A. DEFAZIO  
Chair  
Committee on Transportation &  
Infrastructure



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BENNIE G. THOMPSON  
Chair  
Committee on Homeland Security