

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2024

Mr. Ed Bastian  
Chief Executive Officer  
Delta Air Lines  
1030 Delta Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30354

Dear Mr. Bastian:

We have strong concerns over the extensive flight disruptions caused by the recent global technology outage.<sup>1</sup> Families and travelers were unexpectedly stranded at airports across the country and Delta Air Lines' insufficient customer response and ongoing operational failures—including more than 6,000 cancelled flights—are unacceptable.<sup>2</sup> We recognize that the cascading impacts of the global outage were not exclusive to your airline, but Delta experienced such significant system challenges after other air carriers mostly recovered.<sup>3</sup> The traveling public expects and deserves better.

The consequences of the technology outage were felt across the U.S. aviation system; however, it is clear the resulting flight disruptions disproportionately impacted Delta's customers. According to reports, on Friday, July 19<sup>th</sup> alone, Delta cancelled more than 1,200 flights, compared to the 649 flights cancelled by United Airlines, 408 flights by American Airlines, and 234 flights by Spirit Airlines on that same day.<sup>4</sup> Inexplicably, Delta's operational failures continued over the last several days despite other airlines having resolved theirs.<sup>5</sup> While we are pleased to see that Delta's operations will return to normal this week, the disparity in recovery time compared to other U.S. airlines is unacceptable.<sup>6</sup> The abrupt nature of these flight disruptions have left passengers justifiably frustrated, with many experiencing exorbitant customer service wait times, lost baggage, and inefficient alternative travel options.<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, Delta's pilots and flight attendants were caught in the wake of your airline's failure due to continued technical issues with your crew tracking system.<sup>8</sup>

As a result of the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*, any passengers experiencing these kinds of extreme flight delays or cancellations are entitled to be made whole, and we fully expect Delta to comply with the law. Particularly relevant given recent events are the requirements for

<sup>1</sup> Associated Press, *Airlines and others rush to get back on track after global tech disruption*, July 20, 2024, available at <https://apnews.com/article/worldwide-internet-outage-90cc7c25004ce83fd8391c4193064eccc>.

<sup>2</sup> Chris Isidore, Isabel Rosales and Amanda Musa, *Delta is still melting down. It could last all week*, CNN, July 23, 2024, available at <https://www.cnn.com/2024/07/23/business/delta-flight-cancellations/index.html>

<sup>3</sup> Aaron Gregg, *Delta cancels 800 more flights as it struggles to recover from tech outage*, The Washington Post, July 22, 2024, available at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2024/07/22/delta-cancellations-microsoft-crowdstrike-outage/>

<sup>4</sup> *Id.*

<sup>5</sup> *Supra* at 2.

<sup>6</sup> David Shephardson, *Delta to return to normal operations Thursday as flight cancellations ease*, Reuters, July 24, 2024, available at <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/delta-flight-cancellations-wednesday-fall-sharply-2024-07-24/>

<sup>7</sup> Mary Smith, *Frustration continues as more flights canceled, delayed at Hartsfield-Jackson Airport*, Fox5Atlanta, July 22, 2024, available at <https://www.fox5atlanta.com/news/flight-cancelations-atlanta-airport-global-crowdstrike-outage>

<sup>8</sup> *Supra* at 2.

airlines to (1) refund passengers when their nonrefundable flight is cancelled, significantly delayed, or changed if they choose not to fly on the delayed or changed flight;<sup>9</sup> and (2) establish policies regarding the reimbursement for lodging, related transportation, and meal costs incurred due to a flight cancellation or significant delay attributable to an airline.<sup>10</sup>

Decisive actions must be taken to recover Delta's operations and restore Americans' confidence in the reliability of our aviation system. We expect Delta to fully comply with any federal investigations or audits into the airlines' handling of the disruption to flights resulting from the recent global technology outage.<sup>11</sup> We also request a detailed response describing Delta's ongoing operational and customer service challenges, as well as your expected path forward to expeditiously resolve these failures and make passengers whole. Specifically, we expect detailed written responses to the following questions:

1. When did Delta first identify an internal system failure as a result of the July 19<sup>th</sup> global technology outage?
2. Upon identification of any resulting internal system failure, what actions did Delta take to mitigate the impact on its operations?
3. Did Delta have any redundancies or preventive measures in place to ensure the resiliency of its internal systems in the event of a system failure, particularly of this magnitude?
4. If so, why did these measures fail? If not, please explain the lack of these measures, including any analysis conducted to determine why such measures were unnecessary.
5. Why has Delta been slower to recover its operations than other U.S. airlines?
6. As required under the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*, how is Delta refunding its customers for flight cancellations and reimbursing its customers for any incurred costs resulting from the ongoing disruptions?
7. What are your protocols for ensuring your flight crews are taken care of, including finding accommodations, during systemic operational failures? When and how will Delta compensate these flight crews for their lost flight hours?
8. How will Delta work with its pilots and flight attendants to address any vulnerabilities in its crew tracking system or other related issues that were exposed by this system failure?
9. What communication has Delta had with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to address the cascading impacts of the recent global technology outage? How

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<sup>9</sup> Pub. L. No. 118–63 §503.

<sup>10</sup> Pub. L. No. 118–63 §512.

<sup>11</sup> Justine Fisher, *DOT investigating Delta over IT outage chaos*, CNBC, July 23, 2024, available at <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/07/23/dot-investigating-delta-over-it-outage-chaos.html>

will you work with the DOT to prevent these mass flight disruptions from occurring in the future?

**Please provide your response as soon as possible, but no later than Friday, August 2, 2024.** We look forward to working with you to overcome these systemic challenges and to ensure a safe and seamless travel experience for passengers. If you have any questions about this request, please contact Brian Bell, Democratic Staff Director, Subcommittee on Aviation, at [Brian.Bell@mail.house.gov](mailto:Brian.Bell@mail.house.gov).

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure



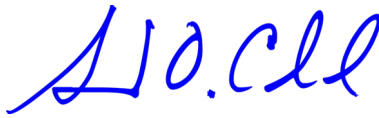
Steve Cohen  
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Ranking Member,  
Subcommittee on Aviation



Greg Stanton  
Vice Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure



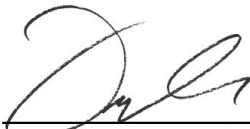
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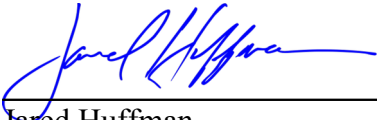
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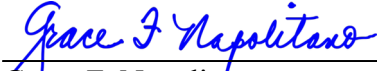
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Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress



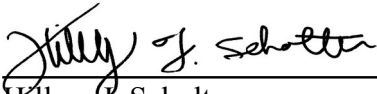
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