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August 18, 2023

Robert Isom  
Chief Executive Officer  
American Airlines Group Inc.  
1 Skyview Dr.  
Fort Worth, TX 76155

Ed Bastian  
Chief Executive Officer  
Delta Air Lines, Inc.  
1030 Delta Blvd.  
Atlanta, GA 30354-1989

Scott Kirby  
Chief Executive Officer  
United Airlines Holdings, Inc.  
233 South Wacker Dr.  
Chicago, IL 60606

Robert E. Jordan  
Chief Executive Officer  
Southwest Airlines  
2702 Love Field Dr.  
Dallas, TX 75235

Dear Mr. Isom, Mr. Bastian, Mr. Kirby and Mr. Jordan,

On behalf of the undersigned labor organizations representing aviation industry workers, we write to express our concern over the airline industry's decision to prioritize short-term profits over workers and airport operations.

The aviation industry is proud to be a bastion of middle-class jobs, yet far too many workers in the industry fail to make a living wage. The lowest-paying jobs in airports are overwhelmingly staffed by people of color, and many airport workers' wages have not budged in nearly 20 years. In particular, the airport service workforce – powered largely by Black, brown and immigrant workers – is essential to the functioning and safety of our airports. From coast to coast, these frontline workers help make air travel possible from the curb to the cabin through their work as cleaners, baggage handlers, security officers, wheelchair attendants, catering and concessions workers, gate agents, lounge workers and other ground handling service providers. Yet too often they are denied a living wage or critical benefits like affordable health care and paid time off.

Now, workers and your companies have the ability to fix this together and support policies that set a federal wage and benefit floor for airport workers nationwide by including the Good Jobs for Good Airports wage and benefit standards in the upcoming FAA Reauthorization.

In past years, your airlines and airline lobbying groups lobbied against legislation that would empower working people. For example, American Airlines Group Inc. lobbied between 2016 and 2021 to amend or oppose minimum and living wage bills in Philadelphia. In 2017, Delta sued New York City over its paid sick leave law. In 2020, Southwest testified against the Secure Maryland Wage Act, which established higher wage and benefit standards across the state's major airports. And in 2022, United provided over \$1 million to the aviation industry lobbying arm, Airlines for America, which has an extensive record of opposing improvements for airline industry workers such as state laws that would provide paid sick leave, raise wages and more.



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Last year, you each earned between \$4.89 million to \$9.8 million. According to the IATA, North American carriers are expected to realize profits of \$11.4 billion in 2023. As airlines are on track to double their profits from last year, we're asking that you use this opportunity to invest in the very workers who help fuel your businesses, instead of driving a race to the bottom in wages and benefits. Low wages, lack of health care and paid time off are driving high rates of turnover among airport workers, even as travel bookings are projected to exceed pre-pandemic rates this year. These efforts come at a huge cost to the efficiency of our airports, with travelers, taxpayers and workers ultimately paying the price.


Further, failing to ensure fair wages and benefits for airport service workers compromises safe and efficient airport operations. Additionally, workers continue to face on the job challenges, including an increase of violent incidents at airports. High turnover translates into a loss of trained, experienced staff. In turn, less-experienced workers may lack necessary training on hazards and safety procedures, and feel less empowered to voice their concerns. Altogether, these ripple effects have resulted in a range of incidents at multiple airports, including reported injuries, fatalities, equipment damage and accidents in ground handling operations. A recent survey published by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) found that 60% of ground-handling companies said they did not have enough qualified staff to ensure smooth operations this summer.


Our request to you is simple: support the airport service workers who keep our airports safe, clean, and running. Combined, your airlines accounted for over 50% of domestic air travel between February 2022 to January 2023, and your airlines have the power to help stabilize airport operations – that starts by supporting the inclusion of the Good Jobs for Good Airports Act's standards within FAA Reauthorization to ensure every airport job is a good union job, with the pay and benefits workers need to thrive.


Time and time again, we have heard our members say that they love their jobs, they love helping passengers, and they want to help build a stronger air travel system. Now it's up to you, your companies and your service providers to make this a reality by heeding workers' calls.

Sincerely,

  
Mary Kay Henry, President  
Service Employees International Union

  
Claude Cummings, Jr., President  
Communications Workers of America

  
D. Taylor, President  
Unite Here

  
Greg Regan, President  
Transportation Trades Department  
AFL-CIO

  
Edward Sicher,  
Allied Pilots Association

  
President Julie Hedrick, National President  
Association of Professional Flight Attendants