

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 22, 2020

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

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write to urge the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to deny American Airlines' request for an exemption from its service obligations at Worcester Regional Airport. As you know, the *Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act* authorizes the DOT to require air carriers to maintain a minimum level of scheduled service as a condition for receiving emergency financial aid.¹ We were alerted that American Airlines recently submitted a request for an exemption from this requirement at Worcester Regional Airport, and we urge you to deny this request in order to maintain robust air transportation services at this essential hub.

Worcester Regional Airport connects Central Massachusetts to the world, offering 5 daily roundtrip services through JetBlue, American Airlines, and Delta Air Lines, with connections to over 120 destinations.² Since 2010, the airport has served over 750,000 passengers and contributed nearly \$97 million to the region's economy.³ We are concerned that allowing American Airlines to cut its service in Worcester will diminish the airport's ability to serve the region's residents and commerce now and when the coronavirus pandemic has ended.

DOT denied a similar exemption request from JetBlue Airways, which sought to temporarily suspend its service to Worcester Regional Airport in April.⁴ In DOT's order denying JetBlue's request, your agency noted that the *CARES Act* and your "Show Cause Order" already provide "substantial flexibilities" for the airline industry that "appropriately balance the needs of communities to retain at least minimal connections to the national air transportation system" with the "economic needs" of airlines.⁵ As such, the DOT ruled that additional service cuts were unwarranted and that JetBlue must maintain its vital connections in Worcester. We believe that American Airlines is similarly situated and the DOT should likewise require it to maintain

¹ Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, §§ 4005, 4114(b), Pub. L. No. 116-136, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/748/text>.

² Massachusetts Port Authority, *Worcester Regional Airport*, <http://www.massport.com/worcester-airport/> (last visited May 20, 2020).

³ *Id.*

⁴ JetBlue Airways Corporation - Request for Exemption from Service Obligation (Apr. 8, 2020), available at: <https://beta.regulations.gov/document/DOT-OST-2020-0037-0048>.

⁵ Notice of Action Taken re: JetBlue Airways Corporation (Apr. 16, 2020), available at: <https://beta.regulations.gov/document/DOT-OST-2020-0037-0069>.

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service in Worcester, so that the residents of Central Massachusetts can continue to benefit from a robust regional transportation hub.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress