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U.S. SENATE CLIMATE CHANGE CLEARING HOUSE

United States Senate

October 20, 2014

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The Honorable Anthony Foxx
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Foxx:

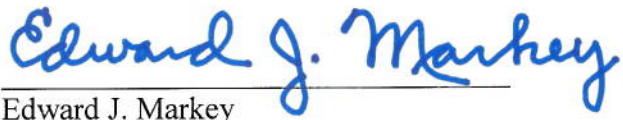
We write to bring to your attention a recent incident of a fire precipitated by an e-cigarette at Logan International Airport. According to an investigation conducted by the Massachusetts State Fire Marshal's office, a fire was initiated by an e-cigarette device located in the exterior pocket of passenger luggage that was being transferred from one airplane's cargo hold to another. Fortunately, this fire was quickly discovered and the luggage was removed prior to takeoff from Boston to the second leg of the journey. However, a fire on any aircraft could have dire and deadly consequences, and demands a swift and thorough investigation by the Department. Until this investigation is concluded, we ask the Department to consider banning electronic nicotine delivery systems, including e-cigarettes, from the cargo holds of commercial airplanes.

Over the last decade there has been an emergence of a number of electronic nicotine delivery systems, including hookah pens, vape pens, e-cigarettes and personal nicotine vaporizers. These systems work similarly in that they all contain a battery-powered heating element that vaporizes a solution into simulated smoke. The solutions used, often called e-liquids, not only contain high levels of flammable nicotine, but a number of other additives, flavors and colors that are highly flammable. Furthermore, some of these electronic devices also use rechargeable lithium batteries that could be activated by the press of a button. The heating elements on these devices reach high temperatures, posing a significant safety concern for both the plane's passengers as well as citizens on the ground.

These devices have the potential to be accidentally triggered during the normal handling of luggage or during any movement of the luggage during flight. If such a device was triggered and a fire went undetected or initiated during flight, a major tragedy could occur. We must ensure that electronic nicotine delivery systems do not pose a safety concern on passenger planes. Accordingly, we ask that you immediately investigate the hazards posed by these devices on passenger planes, and respond within 30 days of our inquiry with a detailed plan about how the Department intends to address safety issues raised by the presence of electronic nicotine delivery systems on passenger planes.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator