

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

January 23, 2017

Oscar Munoz  
Chief Executive Officer  
United Airlines, Inc.  
P.O. Box 06649,  
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Mr. Munoz,

We write to inquire about the state of United Airlines' Information Technology (IT) system in light of yesterday's computer failure and flight disruptions. According to reports, an IT issue yesterday caused United Airlines to ground all domestic flights for two and a half hours, resulting in hundreds of flight delays.

In a world where consumers can find, purchase, and check in for flights from their smartphones, IT failures should not be grounding entire airline fleets. Now that three of the four largest air carriers have recently experienced significant disruptions due to IT failures, it is time for airlines to update their IT systems for the jet age. Further, in the event of irregular operations caused by air carriers, airlines should assist passengers, including by rebooking passengers on another airline or on a different mode of transportation, without charging additional fees.

In continuation of our ongoing investigation into the reliability of airline IT systems and airline consumer protections, we respectfully request you respond to the following questions about yesterday's incident:

1. What was the cause of yesterday's IT failure? What component, system, and/or software failed and why?
  - a. Recent reports suggest that some airlines have aging, complex IT systems that are comprised of various parts from different airline mergers. How old is the component, system, and/or software that failed? Was it acquired from a merger? If yes, how was it integrated into the existing IT system?
2. Were there safeguards and backups in place to prevent this IT failure from occurring? If no, why not? If yes, how did these safeguards and backups perform and why did they fail to prevent the disruption?
3. How many flights were cancelled and/or delayed due to this IT failure? How many passengers were impacted by the cancellations and/or delays?
4. Did United Airlines rebook passengers who experienced flight disruptions on another airline or with a different mode of transportation for no additional charge? If no, why not? If so:
  - a. Under what circumstances were passengers eligible to be rebooked on another airline or on a different mode of transportation?

- b. Did your airline honor eligible passengers' requests to be rebooked on another airline or on a different mode of transportation? If no, why not?
  - c. How did your airline notify passengers when they were eligible to be rebooked on another airline or on a different mode of transportation?
  - d. How many passengers were rebooked on another airline or on a different mode of transportation? Please list the other air carriers and modes of transportation on which your airline rebooked passengers.
  - e. Did United Airlines refund the full cost of the air ticket minus the cost of the alternative mode of transportation?
5. What other compensation and recourse, including but not limited to lodging, food, reimbursement, and vouchers did your airline provide consumers impacted by the IT failure? How many passengers received this compensation? For those passengers whose flights were cancelled or delayed, how were they notified when they became eligible for this compensation?
  6. Has your airline waived all fees, including change and cancellation fees, for impacted passengers?
  7. In light of this outage, how will your airline change its IT system or established additional safeguards and backups?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. Please provide written responses to these questions no later than February 6, 2017. If you have any questions, please have a member of your staff contact Daniel Greene (202 – 224 – 2742) in Senator Markey's office or Zach Radford (202 – 224 – 2823) in Senator Blumenthal's office.

Sincerely,

  
Edward J. Markey  
United States Senate

  
Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate