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United States Senate

August 2, 2018

SUITE SD-255
DIRKSEN BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-2107
202-224-2742

975 JFK FEDERAL BUILDING
15 NEW SUDBURY STREET
BOSTON, MA 02203
617-565-8519

222 MILLIKEN BOULEVARD, SUITE 312
FALL RIVER, MA 02721
508-677-0523

1550 MAIN STREET, 4TH FLOOR
SPRINGFIELD, MA 01103
413-785-4610

David P. Pecoske
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
601 12th Street
Arlington, VA 20598

Dear Administrator Pecoske,

I write to inquire about reported proposals to cut passenger security screening at over 150 airports across the nation.

According to recent reports, a Transportation Security Administration (TSA) working group is conducting a risk and cost analysis on a proposal to eliminate security screening at small and medium-sized airports, which could affect 10,000 passengers daily. Rather than undergoing TSA screening prior to departing from these 150 airports, passengers and their luggage would be screened once they arrive at larger airports for connecting flights. Although the proposal could save \$115 million a year, the working group has acknowledged in internal documents that screening cuts would introduce a “small (non-zero) undesirable increase in risk” to the flying public and our loved ones on the ground.¹

I am deeply troubled by this proposal and fear that the cuts to TSA screening under consideration could endanger the public. Terrorists and those who wish to do our nation harm still consider aircraft desirable targets. Just three years ago, terrorists downed a Russian passenger airliner departing Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt. Last year, to forestall new threats to aviation security, the Department of Homeland Security banned laptops in the cabins of aircraft arriving from more than 100 countries. With these types of aviation security threats still present, common sense demands that we should be strengthening our screening practices, not weakening — or eliminating — them.

The 9/11 Commission Report concluded that across the government, the “most important failure was one of imagination.”² We failed to imagine two planes from Boston’s Logan Airport with

¹ Rene Marsh & Eli Watkins, *TSA considering eliminating screening at smaller airports* (Aug. 1, 2018), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/01/politics/tsa-considering-eliminating-screening-at-smaller-airports/index.html>.

² The 9/11 Commission Report, Final Report of the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States, Executive Summary, https://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report_Exec.pdf, at 9.

dozens of my constituents on board being hijacked and crashed into the World Trade Center in New York City. We vowed to never repeat the mistakes of the past, which is why I urge you to reconsider any proposal that could jeopardize our aviation security.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully request that you provide any documents detailing the proposal and ask that, by August 16, 2018, you answer the following questions:

1. Please indicate whether, and if so, why any of the following screening services would be eliminated under the proposal:
 - a. passenger screening, including pat-down screening;
 - b. carry-on baggage screening;
 - c. checked baggage screening;
 - d. canine teams;
 - e. perimeter security, access controls, and worker vetting;
 - f. cargo screening, including implementation of the Certified Cargo Screening Program; and
 - g. any other screening services not included in this list.
2. Please identify each airport that could lose screening services under the proposal, including the state and city in which it is located.
3. Under what circumstances would a passenger no longer be screened at any airport that could lose screening services under the proposal? Would screening be eliminated only for passengers with a connecting flight at a larger airport (where they would be screened upon arrival)? Are there circumstances in which a passenger flying between two small airports would never be screened?
4. How would this proposal advance TSA's mission to "protect the nation's transportation systems to ensure freedom of movement for people and commerce?"³
5. What is the nature and degree of risk facing the airports that could lose passenger screening under the proposal?
 - a. Are there any specific threats of which TSA is aware that could impact passengers and aircraft traveling through these airports? If so, please describe them.
 - b. How does TSA measure and gauge that risk?

³ Mission, Transportation Security Administration, <https://www.tsa.gov/about/tsa-mission>.

- c. How does TSA recommend mitigating these risks if the proposal is adopted?
6. How would TSA spend the \$115 million projected to be saved under the proposal? Would this funding be diverted to security at larger airports? If so, identify each program or service and the amount of funding it will receive.

I thank you for your attention to this important matter. If you have any questions about my request, please contact Daniel Greene of my staff at 202-224-2742.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator