

United States Senate

October 9, 2025

The Honorable Christopher T. Sununu
President & Chief Executive Officer
Airlines for America
1275 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Suite 1300
Washington, DC 20004

Dear Mr. Sununu,

As we enter the second week of the federal government shutdown caused by President Trump and congressional Republicans, I write to remind Airlines for America members of their legal obligation to provide immediate hassle-free refunds to passengers whose flights are canceled or significantly delayed. The aviation system relies on the federal government to operate safely and efficiently, and the flying public is already feeling the shutdown's effects, with rising numbers of flight delays and cancellations. At this moment of extreme uncertainty, it is more important than ever that airlines comply with the law and provide consumers with the refunds they deserve, without requiring them to jump through unnecessary and difficult hoops.

Federal law protects air travelers' right to a hassle-free refund for significant flight disruptions. For years, the Federal Aviation Administration has required airlines to provide consumers with a full refund for all flight cancellations and significant delays, if the passenger chooses not to fly on their original flight, accept rebooking on an alternative flight, or accept a flight credit. More recently, the bipartisan *FAA Reauthorization Act* codified that rule and required airlines to deliver any required refunds automatically, without any further action from the consumer.¹ With more than 1,000 flight cancellations and tens of thousands of flight delays since Monday² — causing rising anxiety for travelers — thousands of passengers this week may be owed a cash refund under the law. Although Republicans' refusal to negotiate and open the government has made the public's travel plans increasingly uncertain, their right to a refund is not.

To ensure that airlines are complying with their refund obligations, I call on Airlines for America members to immediately:

- Publicly reaffirm their commitment to complying with the legal requirement to provide a hassle-free refund to flyers who experience a significant delay or cancellation; and

¹ *FAA Reauthorization Act*, Pub. L. No. 118-63, § 42305, 138 Stat. 1188 (2024), <https://www.congress.gov/bill/118th-congress/house-bill/3935/text>.

² Flightaware, *Delays and Cancellations*, (Oct. 8, 2025), <https://www.flightaware.com/live/cancelled/minus2days>.

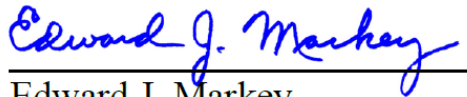
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- Identify for my office, no later than October 22, 2025, the number of refunds issued since the start of the government shutdown and the average time to process those refunds.

Airlines for America members share my interest in avoiding delays and cancellations and keeping travelers safe. However, airlines must meet their legal and moral obligation to treat passengers fairly during this period of uncertainty. Americans deserve reliability and respect — not corporate obfuscation and red tape — when their travel plans are upended through no fault of their own.

I look forward to your swift response and the cooperation of your member airlines to ensure full compliance with the law and protection for the flying public.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator