

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Bradley D. Tilden
CEO
Alaska Airlines
P.O. Box 68900-SEAEC
Seattle, WA 98168

Dear Mr. Tilden:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

Most domestic airlines have taken some steps to temporarily waive coronavirus-related change and cancellation fees. But travelers who cancel their flights are finding that they will receive only airline credits, not cash refunds.² Unfortunately, these travel vouchers do the public little good in this time of emergency, especially when airlines require their redemption in as little as 90 days.³ Americans need money now to pay for basic necessities, not temporary credits towards future travel.

Additionally, many of our constituents have experienced expensive flight cancellations by commercial airlines – without reimbursement – as they sought to return to the United States, particularly from countries that implemented travel restrictions in response to the COVID-19 crisis. We appreciate the efforts many airlines have already made to assist the State Department with evacuation flights. However, prices for flight tickets back to the United States have been inconsistent and often exorbitantly expensive, forcing Americans to pay thousands of dollars out-of-pocket, simply to comply with national travel restrictions and State Department guidance.

¹ Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, § 4003(b)(1), Pub. L. No. 116-136, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/748/text>.

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Moreover, many of these flights were also cancelled last-minute, leaving Americans no choice but to resort to alternative travel arrangements.

It would be unacceptable to us for your company to hold onto travelers' payments for canceled flights instead of refunding them, especially in light of the \$25 billion bailout that the airline industry just received from Congress.⁴ We urge you to offer cash refunds for flight cancellations so that Americans can better weather this crisis.

We specifically respectfully request that you respond to the following questions by April 7, 2020:

1. Please estimate the total value of all travel vouchers and credits you have issued during the coronavirus pandemic.
2. Please estimate the total number of flights that your airline cancelled during the COVID-19 crisis, including flights cancelled due to travel restrictions implemented by countries globally.
3. Will your airline commit to providing full cash refunds to travelers who cancel their flights during the coronavirus outbreak, including refunds in lieu of travel credits to those who have already received but not used those credits during this pandemic? If not, why not?
4. Will your airline commit to providing full cash refunds to any travelers who experienced flight cancellations due to COVID-19 travel restrictions implemented globally?
5. If you will not issue real cash refunds, will your airline commit to making any travel credits valid indefinitely? If not, why not?
6. Will your airline commit to working with the State Department to expedite commercial flights – at an affordable price – for all Americans who remain stranded abroad?

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. Due to the current telework policies of many Senate offices during the coronavirus outbreak, physical signatures are unavailable. The listed senators have asked to be signatories to this letter.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

⁴ Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, *supra* note 1.

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Maurice J. Gallagher, Jr.
CEO
Allegiant Air
PO Box 371477
Las Vegas, NV 89137

Dear Mr. Gallagher:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Doug Parker
CEO
American Airlines
P.O. Box 619616
DFW Airport, TX 75261-9616

Dear Mr. Parker:

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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Edward H. Bastian
CEO
Delta Air Lines
P.O. Box 20706
Atlanta, GA 30320

Dear Mr. Bastian:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

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Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Barry L. Biffle
CEO
Frontier Airlines
4545 Airport Way
Denver, CO 80239

Dear Mr. Biffle:

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United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Peter Ingram
CEO
Hawaiian Airlines
P.O. Box 30008
Honolulu, HI 96820

Dear Mr. Ingram:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

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March 31, 2020

Robin Hayes
CEO
JetBlue Airways
27-01 Queens Plaza North
Long Island City, NY 11101

Dear Mr. Hayes:

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March 31, 2020

Gary C. Kelly
CEO
Southwest Airlines
2702 Love Field Drive
Dallas, Texas 75235

Dear Mr. Kelly:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

Most domestic airlines have taken some steps to temporarily waive coronavirus-related change and cancellation fees. But travelers who cancel their flights are finding that they will receive only airline credits, not cash refunds.² Unfortunately, these travel vouchers do the public little good in this time of emergency, especially when airlines require their redemption in as little as 90 days.³ Americans need money now to pay for basic necessities, not temporary credits towards future travel.

Additionally, many of our constituents have experienced expensive flight cancellations by commercial airlines – without reimbursement – as they sought to return to the United States, particularly from countries that implemented travel restrictions in response to the COVID-19 crisis. We appreciate the efforts many airlines have already made to assist the State Department with evacuation flights. However, prices for flight tickets back to the United States have been inconsistent and often exorbitantly expensive, forcing Americans to pay thousands of dollars out-of-pocket, simply to comply with national travel restrictions and State Department guidance.

¹ Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, § 4003(b)(1), Pub. L. No. 116-136, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/house-bill/748/text>.

² Dawn Gilbertson, *Don't want to fly during coronavirus crisis? Don't rush to cancel that ticket. Here's why*, USA Today (Mar. 21, 2020), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/airline-news/2020/03/19/coronavirus-travel-dont-cancel-flights-immediately-heres-why/2868492001/>.

³ Dia Adams and Caroline Lupini, *Master List of All Major International Airline Coronavirus Change and Cancellation Policies*, Forbes (Mar. 19, 2020), <https://www.forbes.com/sites/advisor/2020/03/11/master-list-of-airline-coronavirus-policies/>.

Moreover, many of these flights were also cancelled last-minute, leaving Americans no choice but to resort to alternative travel arrangements.

It would be unacceptable to us for your company to hold onto travelers' payments for canceled flights instead of refunding them, especially in light of the \$25 billion bailout that the airline industry just received from Congress.⁴ We urge you to offer cash refunds for flight cancellations so that Americans can better weather this crisis.

We specifically respectfully request that you respond to the following questions by April 7, 2020:

1. Please estimate the total value of all travel vouchers and credits you have issued during the coronavirus pandemic.
2. Please estimate the total number of flights that your airline cancelled during the COVID-19 crisis, including flights cancelled due to travel restrictions implemented by countries globally.
3. Will your airline commit to providing full cash refunds to travelers who cancel their flights during the coronavirus outbreak, including refunds in lieu of travel credits to those who have already received but not used those credits during this pandemic? If not, why not?
4. Will your airline commit to providing full cash refunds to any travelers who experienced flight cancellations due to COVID-19 travel restrictions implemented globally?
5. If you will not issue real cash refunds, will your airline commit to making any travel credits valid indefinitely? If not, why not?
6. Will your airline commit to working with the State Department to expedite commercial flights – at an affordable price – for all Americans who remain stranded abroad?

Thank you for your attention to these important matters. Due to the current telework policies of many Senate offices during the coronavirus outbreak, physical signatures are unavailable. The listed senators have asked to be signatories to this letter.

Sincerely,

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator

⁴ Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, *supra* note 1.

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Ted Christie III
CEO
Spirit Airlines
2800 Executive Way
Miramar, FL 33025

Dear Mr. Christie:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

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Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Jude I. Bricker
CEO
Sun Country Airlines
2005 Cargo Road
Minneapolis, MN 55450

Dear Mr. Bricker:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

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United States Senator

Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

Kamala D. Harris
United States Senator

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr
United States Senator

United States Senate

March 31, 2020

Oscar Munoz
CEO
United Airlines, Inc.
PO Box 06649
Chicago, IL 60606-0649

Dear Mr. Munoz:

We write to urge your airline to issue full cash refunds to all customers who cancel their flights during the COVID-19 crisis, and to American citizens who encounter flight cancellations while stranded in countries that implemented travel restrictions. The ongoing pandemic is placing enormous financial strain on millions of Americans, and families need cash to pay for essentials such as food, housing, and medical care. In light of this pressing need and the unprecedented bailout — to the tune of \$25 billion — that the airline industry just received from Congress,¹ we believe your company has a moral responsibility to provide real refunds, not travel vouchers, to consumers, and to support State Department efforts to repatriate any American citizens trying to come home.

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