



March 19, 2020

### **Aviation Unions Call on Congress to Prioritize Workers in Relief Package**

Dear Senator:

On behalf of the undersigned labor organizations representing aviation employees, we write to you regarding the importance of ensuring that any proposed relief package for the airline industry is centered on the needs of employees.

The economic and health effects of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has created extraordinary pressures on U.S. aviation workers and their industry. These workers face substantial short-term and long-term economic consequences, while continuing to navigate through a worsening public health pandemic. Meeting this challenge will require leadership and collaboration from all parties – the White House, Congress, workers, and employers. We stand ready to find a solution.

While our goal remains to return this industry to a place of financial strength, we have serious concerns regarding how any relief package for airlines will facilitate continued employment, prevent short and long-term damage to employee compensation, and preserve collective bargaining rights. In the wake of the tragic events of September 11, 2001, the industry faced similar, extraordinary economic headwinds. Unfortunately, the response to that crisis failed to prioritize workers and ultimately cost our economy billions of dollars in lost wages, benefits, and expertise as airlines laid off a third of their employees. The aid Congress provided in 2001 to help revive the ailing aviation industry ultimately went to shareholders and executives, with little support flowing through to frontline workers. Subsequently, the carriers sought direct concessions from their workers and the government used the bailout to restructure collectively bargained contracts. Thereafter, most airlines abused the bankruptcy code to discharge collective bargaining agreements and further impose harsh and permanent concessions. In the process, aviation

employees conceded \$83.5 billion in wage and retirement concessions, including the dissolution of nearly every defined benefit pension plan and were locked into contracts that ceased to reflect economic circumstances, even as the airlines returned to profitability.

As policymakers undertake important decisions to ensure this vital industry continues to operate, it is imperative that any relief package focus on the workers who are essential to the industry's existence. Any federal aid must keep employees on payroll, protect labor rights and come with statutory guarantees that the money will go to the frontline workforce. Aviation workers and airline catering workers stand ready to work as partners to return this industry to the economic engine that drives our economy and connects America and the world.

Sincerely,

Association of Flight Attendants-CWA  
Association of Professional Flight Attendants  
Air Line Pilots Association  
Allied Pilots Association  
Communications Workers of America  
International Association of Machinists and Aerospace Workers  
International Brotherhood of Teamsters – Airline Division  
Independent Pilots Association  
NetJets Association of Shared Aircraft Pilots  
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists  
Southwest Airlines Pilots Association  
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO  
Transport Workers Union of America  
UNITE HERE