



June 12, 2023

The Hon. Sam Graves  
Chairman  
House Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Garret Graves  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Aviation  
House Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
Washington, DC 20515

The Hon. Steve Cohen  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Aviation  
House Committee on  
Transportation and Infrastructure  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Graves and Ranking Members Larsen and Cohen:

On behalf of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) and the more than 160,000 Americans who work in the travel agency sector across the country, I am writing to express our unequivocal support for the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act (H.R. 3935), bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and related aviation programs for the next five years.

Responsible for the sale of roughly half of air travel in the U.S., travel advisors – online, brick-and-mortar or hybrid business models in between – serve an indispensable role in our country’s commercial aviation system and the broader travel and tourism industry. In 2019, travel agencies sold nearly 830,000 airline tickets *per day*, representing 48 percent of total sales and aggregate spending of more than \$97 billion.<sup>1</sup> We are proud that ASTA’s current membership of nearly 8,000 travel agencies, independent travel advisors and related companies includes substantial numbers of member companies in Missouri (161), Washington (185), Louisiana (95) and Tennessee (115).

As introduced, H.R. 3935 includes many of the provisions ASTA for which has been advocating on behalf of our members since the beginning of the year – and in some cases far longer. While comprehensive in scope, the bill recognizes the invaluable role travel advisors play in the larger travel and tourism ecosystem while serving as a key voice for consumers.

The following provisions of the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act would particularly benefit the travel agencies, individual travel advisors and other similarly situated third-party intermediaries that make up ASTA’s membership and are regulated by the Department of

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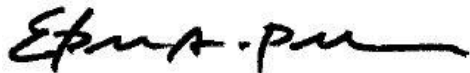
<sup>1</sup> Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC). [Airline Sales Statistics](#).

Transportation (DOT) along with other industry stakeholders as “ticket agents”<sup>2</sup> under federal statute:

- **Adds a Travel Agency Seat to DOT Consumer Protection Advisory Committee (Section 704)** – Adds a seat for “ticket agents and travel management companies” to the DOT’s Aviation Consumer Protection Advisory Committee, based on freestanding legislation (H.R. 3780) introduced by Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV). This provision will bring valuable insights that are missing today and help the Department meet its consumer protection mission.
- **Creates New Consumer Advisory Committee, including Travel Agencies (Section 708)** – Creates a new “Passenger Experience Advisory Committee” at DOT, with a seat set aside for ticket agents among its membership. The goal of the committee would be to advise the Secretary of Transportation on ways to improve the passenger experience in air transportation customer service, via biennial reports.
- **Streamlines Disclosures in Offline Ticket Transactions (Section 709)** – Requires DOT to implement a streamlined system for fulfilling air consumer disclosure requirements during “offline” transactions (over-the-phone, face-to-face) within 18 months of enactment. For more on the challenges faced by travel advisors with regard to the multiple disclosures they are required by law and regulation to make today and justification for Section 709, see ASTA’s February submission to the committee.<sup>3</sup>
- **Clarifies Travel Agency Refund Obligations (Section 710)** – Makes clear that a travel agency’s obligation to issue a client refund for a cancelled or significantly changed flight is limited to scenarios where it is in possession of the funds in question, which addresses ASTA concern with regard to a separate, pending DOT rulemaking on airline refunds.<sup>4</sup>

We appreciate the time and effort that went into drafting this comprehensive, bipartisan bill as well as the collaborative approach your staff has taken in terms of stakeholder feedback, and look forward to vigorously supporting it as it moves through the legislative process. If you or your staff have any questions on this legislation or any issues impacting our travel advisor membership, please don’t hesitate to contact me at (703) 739-6842 or [epeck@asta.org](mailto:epeck@asta.org).

Yours Sincerely,



Eben Peck  
Executive Vice President, Advocacy

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<sup>2</sup> See [49 U.S.C. § 40102\(a\)\(45\)](#) (Definitions).

<sup>3</sup> American Society of Travel Advisors. [ASTA to House & Senate Authorizing Committees re: FAA Reauthorization](#). February 24, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> American Society of Travel Advisors. [Travel Advisors to DOT: Don’t Put Us on the Hook for Airline Cancellations](#) [Press Release]. December 14, 2022.