

Thank you Chairman DeFazio, Chairman Larsen, Ranking Member Sam Graves, and Ranking Member Garret Graves for the opportunity to testify on the impact of the longest government shutdown in our history. My name is Sara Nelson, International President of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA, AFL-CIO (AFA), representing nearly 50,000 of aviation's first responders at 20 airlines.

Last week I attended my annual safety and security training required for my qualifications as a certified Flight Attendant. Rule number one when performing safety-sensitive work: remove all distractions and focus. Flight Attendants artfully complete safety tasks, shifting on a moment's notice from the emotional intelligence our job requires to the total focus it takes to perform safety and security duties. And we should talk about addressing the inadequate FAA minimum staffing regulations currently in place once we know our industry is on safe ground. Today, we must focus on the distractions created by this shutdown and the impact it had on running a safe and secure system.

For decades those who want to privatize every government program have vilified government workers as nameless, faceless bureaucrats. But the truth is these are the people who keep us

safe, and they are people who live and work in our communities. If they can't do their job, Flight Attendants can't do our job. And, no one gets out of this unscathed because aviation is what connects and moves our entire economy. This is about our safety, security, and jobs.

Shutdowns are never good. Our current experience is unprecedented. We can never allow it to happen again.

Picture this. Airline pilots typically maintain what they call a "sterile cockpit" during takeoff and landing, when no communication is permitted between the cabin and flightdeck. This is to allow pilots to focus on the most difficult, and task-intensive, parts of the flight. But during the shutdown some pilots briefed flight attendants that there would be no sterile cockpit on their flight. They were so concerned that the shutdown had compromised security screening, that they felt the need to alter safety procedures so that they could be informed immediately if there was a security issue in the cabin.

Air travel is a fully-integrated operation that relies on government and private industry working together. When any link in this chain breaks down, the whole system suffers. We still feel the shock

and horror of losing our flying partners because of gaps in security. We never shake that grief, nor the loss we've experienced for years with furloughs and bankruptcies.

Safety and security is non-negotiable. It is critical that Washington stop the threat of a day 36 and take steps to ensure this never happens again. AFA fully supports the proposed Aviation Funding Stability Act of 2019. This legislation makes sense because there's absolutely no argument to close government when funding exists specifically related to the functions of the FAA. Still, we've all seen that aviation relies on many areas of government to keeping flying safe: ~~DHS, DOT, CBP, State, Justice, FEMA, FDA, EPA.~~ We call on all lawmakers to ensure government workers are never locked out again.

We also worked with this committee to lock in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, including critical issues that matter for the safety of flight attendants, pilots, and passengers. The shutdown stopped implementation of this bill. Flight attendant fatigue exists today. The bill includes improves rest along with implementation of a Fatigue Risk Management Plan to close this safety loophole. Evacuation standards for certification of aircraft do not take into consideration the current cabin environment for

safe evacuation. Secondary cockpit barriers are required to be installed on all new aircraft to help thwart an attempt to breach the flight deck and end the absurd policy of expecting flight attendants to serve as that physical barrier. The bill addresses these issues too, along with sexual assault prevention, reporting and response – among hundreds of other safety initiatives. Again, none this is implemented and the shutdown made it impossible to move forward with accountability.

Flight attendants started to experience the economic impact of the shutdown, as did our communities. For example, delaying the opening of Paine Field to commercial traffic caused Flight Attendants to lose flying, lose pay, and the same is true for pilots and other workers.

In addition, the economic impact to Everett includes cancellation of over 600 crew overnight hotel rooms. This also means other travelers aren't staying in these hotels, eating at nearby restaurants, using transportation, or otherwise spending in the community.

At many airlines, flights were cancelled because FAA could not sign off on delivery of aircraft. More work lost. This was the tip of

the iceberg. 11 million Americans who do work related to our industry were in jeopardy. This hampered our ability to compete with the world and it created damage that may last for years.

CLOSING

There is bipartisan support to keep the government open with stable, long-term funding. Americans overwhelmingly support this solution.

If Washington will not put an end to this crisis, we will take action to save lives and protect U.S. aviation.

I would be happy to answer any questions.