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Thank you Chairman Blunt, Ranking Member Cantwell and members of the committee for the opportunity to testify today. The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA represents 50,000 Flight Attendants at 20 airlines and we partner with the Communications Workers of America who represents nearly 20,000 Customer Service agents. Together we help tens of thousands of flights get in the air safely and even often inspire smiles.

In order to recognize the realities of aviation today, we must look back to the sea change events of September 11, 2001. Following the grief of losing our friends and flying partners our profession and industry changed forever. Over 100,000 aviation jobs were lost nearly over night, most airlines entered bankruptcy and some did not emerge. We lost on average 40 percent of pay, pensions were terminated, work rules were eviscerated, staffing was cut to minimums, and many of the amenities of flying were removed as we had fewer tools to appease weary passengers. Airlines lost billions of dollars and for nearly 10 years the driving force was to cut costs in every area but executive compensation. Cabin interiors were redesigned with smaller seats, closer together. Bankruptcies gave way to airline mergers to cut capacity in the industry so that planes are fuller than ever with more seats, less leg room and carry on baggage at all-time highs as checked baggage fees drove more luggage to the door of the airplane.

Flight Attendants and other aviation workers are working anywhere from 25% to 50% more hours on the job to make ends meet while fatigue studies commissioned by Congress show cabin crew are not getting enough rest.

Flight Attendants and gate agents working on regional airlines, providing feed to major carriers earn on average 45% less, often have fewer work rule protections and many times one Flight Attendant must manage all safety, security and service requirements for 50 passengers who bought the ticket through the mainline Delta, American, United or Alaska.

Even though ticket prices are 40 percent below 1980 levels when adjusted for inflation, airlines are making money again through capacity cuts, ancillary fees and the reduction in fuel prices. Today, U.S. carriers must also compete with predatory Gulf carriers who enter the U.S. market and boast lavish amenities because they are subsidized with well over \$50 billion from their governments. As long as our government fails to enforce the Open Skies Agreement that prohibit this, the burden of cost cutting will further hit employees and consumers.

American announced just this week they airline is adding more seats to their aircraft by reducing legroom to 29 inches. This is going to have a direct impact on flight attendants, who will have to answer to angry passengers enraged by the lack of room. Meanwhile these same flight attendants are reporting they are sick from toxic uniforms and contaminated cabin air. And, Wall Street was in an uproar when their pay was adjusted to an industry average a few weeks ago at a rate that might cover a family's utility bill – because shareholders wined it might be taken out of their returns.

When Delta had another IT crew scheduling meltdown that left passengers stranded for nearly a week, the Flight Attendants without a union contract were left on duty for in excess of 24 hours facing passengers and having to de-escalate tensions while standing on hold to get through to the company for more than 10 hours.

Every day, Flight Attendants and Customer Service Agents working at U.S. airlines or based in the U.S. help tens of thousands of flights and millions of passengers safely travel to their destination without incident. This has become more challenging in recent years with task saturation at boarding and staffing cut significantly, to FAA minimums. There is a rising tension on board our flights and in our airports - in our experience exacerbated by a national narrative full of disrespect for authority, decency and decorum - and fewer of aviation's first responders to manage it. De-escalating conflict between passengers has become a significant portion of work Flight Attendants perform on each flight. Without recognition of our role and authority in the cabin we are very concerned about the dangerous conditions Flight Attendants and agents may be facing at work.

When Flight Attendants simply attempt to do safety compliance checks, they are greeted with refusal and the response "What are you going to do, drag me out of here???" We don't have the option to call for help from authorities in the air and on the ground we are experiencing some authorities refusing to respond because they don't want to end up on the news either.

Flight Attendants are caught in the middle and safety and security will suffer. Aviation safety regulations didn't materialize out of thin air. It was a the deadly crash of British Airtours flight 28M in 1985 where some deaths were attributed to seat configuration at the exit rows and children seated there who couldn't get the exits open that led to requirements in the exit row. Six years later in 1991 US Air flight 1493 crashed with Skywest flight 5569 and further exit row requirements were identified as necessary. When tragedy strikes, we make changes and vow Never Again. We have to mean it.

Now, Flight Attendants are challenged, ignored or chastised for these safety checks. Cabin crew are left to wonder what's worse: failing to comply with federal regulations as part of their job, or doing their safety sensitive work and ending up on the evening news or facing discipline from management because someone didn't like the instruction they gave.

The reality is that the vast majority of passengers come to the plane with kindness in their hearts and a desire to have a peaceful, uneventful flight. The pitting of passengers against crew is wrong.

Look at the focus on aviation. It is a fascinating topic for the public and garners more publicity than almost any other industry. Our airlines, the crews and passengers fly to every corner of the earth when some can only dream of crossing borders. It is one of our greatest symbols and expressions of freedom. Our U.S. industry generates 1.2 trillion dollars in economic activity and supports 10 million jobs. And for these reasons it continues to be the target of those who wage a war against America. We cannot afford to get this wrong. We cannot afford to dismiss safety and security. Flight Attendants cannot effectively do our jobs without passengers recognizing the necessity of following crew member instructions.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today. There is so much more to discuss about staffing at the gate and on the plane, surveillance of crew movement, security concerns and all of the realities of aviation today. I look forward to your questions.