



July 17, 2019

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Chairman  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

The Honorable Sam Graves  
Ranking Member  
Transportation and Infrastructure Committee

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Aviation

The Honorable Garret Graves  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Aviation

**RE: "State of Aviation Safety" Hearing**

Dear Chairman DeFazio, Ranking Member Graves, Chairman Larsen, and Ranking Member Graves:

This Friday, July 19, 2019 marks the 30-year remembrance of United Flight 232 that crash-landed in Sioux City, Iowa after the DC-10 suffered a catastrophic failure of the tail engine and loss of most flight controls. The crew is credited for saving 185 of the 296 lives aboard in what most believe would have been a complete loss of life without their heroic efforts. While the pilots' actions gave everyone a chance to live, Flight Attendants did all that they could to prepare the cabin for impact and get survivors safely off the burning aircraft.

Through their professionalism and dedication, our colleagues showed the world the crucial role Flight Attendants have onboard the aircraft each and every day. We hold close the memory of United Flight Attendant Rene LeBeau who lost her life in the crash as we pay tribute to the crew that performed miracles to save lives: Flight Attendants Janice Brown-Lohr, Georgeann Del Castillo, Barbara Gillaspie, Donna McGrady, Virginia Jan Murray, Timothy Owens, Yeoung (Kathy) Shen, Susan L. White, Rene LeBeau, Captain A.C. Haynes, First Officer William R. Records, Second Officer Dudley J. Dvorak, and United DC-10 flight instructor Dennis E. Fitch.

Tragically, one unrestrained infant perished when his mother could not hold onto him after the airplane hit the ground. In response, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) recommended that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) require all occupants be restrained during takeoff, landing, and turbulent conditions, and that all infants and small children be properly restrained<sup>i</sup>.

**On the 30th remembrance of United Flight 232, AFA again implores the FAA to rule that every passenger must have a seat with a proper restraint, regardless of age, and for lawmakers to take action to ensure this is implemented as soon as possible.** The current practice of merely *recommending* that infants and small children under the age of two be in child restraint seats (CRS) during critical phases of flight is inadequate to protect our most vulnerable passengers.

Flight Attendants ensure that everything onboard an airplane is secured or properly stowed for takeoff and landing; and that passengers are safely restrained in their own seats whenever the fasten seat belt sign is illuminated. The exception to this is children under the age of two. A coffee pot has more protection than an infant in the event of a crash. The captain instructs everyone to buckle up for protection against severe turbulence, with the exception of our smallest passengers.

In 1979, the NTSB issued its first of multiple safety recommendations on aircraft child restraints. The Board recommended that the FAA "[e]xpeditate research with a view toward early rulemaking on a means to most effectively restrain infants and small children during in-flight upsets and survivable crash landings<sup>ii</sup>."

In 1997, Representative Peter DeFazio (H.R. 754, 105th Congress) and Senator Patty Murray (S.398, 105th Congress) introduced bicameral legislation to require safe restraint of children, with age and weight limits, much like laws pertaining to travel in cars.

In 2001, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommended requiring aircraft-approved restraint systems and discontinuing the policy of allowing a child younger than two years to be held on the lap of an adult in the aircraft cabin<sup>ii</sup>. In 2015, the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) released guidance to promote the use of approved child restraints on all commercial aircraft around the globe<sup>iv</sup>. This demonstrates worldwide harmonization. It is past time to mandate this protection for our youngest passengers.

Any requirement to protect children under the age of two must also reflect the reality of the modern aircraft cabin environment. The Cabin Evacuation Standards Study, required in the FAA 2018 Reauthorization Bill, will show what every crew member and air traveler knows—the onboard conditions for travel have changed dramatically in the last 30 years. There was a time when parents could find an empty seat to use a car seat for their child. Those days are gone and gate agents are trained to check car seats because the assumption is that parents did not purchase a seat for their child under the age of two. In some cases, this has created conflict for parents who attempt to follow the FAA recommendations of purchasing a seat and using an approved child restraint.

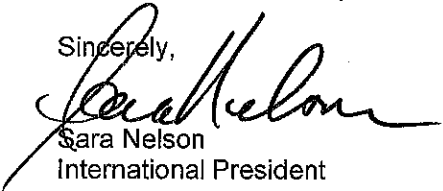
AFA calls on the FAA and lawmakers to ensure that every passenger is secured in an aircraft seat, regardless of age.

Safety regulations are written in blood. Today we must recognize and remember the 230 crew and passengers of TWA 800, who lost their lives 23 years ago. We will continue work every day for the highest standards in aviation security in their honor.

We commend the committee's work and focus on key aviation safety issues including: 10 hours Minimum Rest and a FRMP for Flight Attendants; prohibiting Flags of Convenience models that outsource U.S. aviation jobs (H.R. 3632); the grounding of the 737 MAX; stable funding for the FAA (H.R. 1108); addressing sexual misconduct on planes; cabin environment and evacuation standards; secondary flight deck barriers; combating contaminated bleed air with the Cabin Air Safety Act of 2019 (H.R. 2208 / S. 1112); safety and security of foreign repair stations; setting temperature standards in the cabin; banning voice communications on planes; protecting Passenger Service Agents from assaults; an evaluation and update of Emergency Medical Kit contents including naloxone and epinephrine; protecting against cabin cyber security vulnerabilities; and ensuring the safe transport of lithium batteries.

The Association of Flight Attendants-CWA represents 50,000 of aviation's first responders at 20 airlines. The flying public looks to Flight Attendants when it comes to aviation safety. The work of this committee directly affects our ability to do our jobs.

Sincerely,



Sara Nelson  
International President

<sup>i</sup> NTSB Recommendation A-90-78, May 30, 1990

<sup>ii</sup> NTSB Recommendation A-79-063, August 10, 1979

<sup>iii</sup> Restraint Use on Aircraft, Pediatrics, Vol. 108, No. 5, November 2001

<sup>iv</sup> ICAO Doc 10049, p. vii, Second Edition 2019