



Make today a breakthrough.

May 7, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Chair
Commerce, Science, & Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz, Ranking Member
Commerce, Science, & Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Sam Graves, Chairman
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen, Ranking Member
Transportation & Infrastructure Committee
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairmen Cantwell and Graves and Ranking Members Cruz and Larsen,

On behalf of individuals with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a neuromuscular disease, Cure SMA is pleased to support the disability provisions under consideration in the bipartisan, bicameral FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The disability provisions included within Title V Subtitle B (Accessibility) of the bipartisan, bicameral agreement would greatly improve the safety and dignity of passengers with SMA, including wheelchair users.

The air travel experience for individuals with SMA and other disabilities remains vastly different than passengers without disabilities. Children and adults with SMA face ongoing challenges when travelling by air. While air travel may represent the most obvious travel option due to distance, many adults with SMA and children with SMA avoid or only reluctantly travel by airplane due to lost or damaged wheelchairs, injuries during aircraft seat transfers, inaccessible lavatories, and other negative experiences. *“Flying does not feel like a means of transportation as much as it feels like a horrible and unfair gamble,”* said one person with SMA.

The disability provisions included in the FAA Reauthorization legislation would help improve the air travel experience for people with SMA and other disabilities. Among other things, the Accessibility Title would improve training of personnel who assist passengers who travel with wheelchairs, including proper wheelchair stowage, improve airport accessibility, initiate technical and economic feasibility studies on accommodating passengers in wheelchairs in the main cabin, and strengthen the disability complaint system through better data and enforcement.

Without these meaningful accessibility improvements, air travel for people with disabilities, including individuals with SMA, will remain unequal, unsafe, and undignified. *“When the pilot says, ‘sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight’, that ought to refer to everyone!”* said a parent of an adult child with SMA. Your support of the disability provisions will help make the *“sit back, relax, and enjoy the flight”* announcement a reality for all passengers, including those who travel in wheelchairs.



Make today a breakthrough.

Thank you for efforts to improve the air travel experience for individuals with SMA and other disabilities. Cure SMA is grateful for your leadership and support your efforts to pass the disability provisions as quickly as possible.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "K. A. Hobby".

Kenneth Hobby

President, Cure SMA