



Make today a breakthrough.

June 21, 2024

The Honorable Steve Womack
Chairman
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mike Quigley
Ranking Member
Transportation, Housing and Urban
Development, and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Womack and Ranking Member Quigley,

As the leading organization that supports individuals with spinal muscular atrophy (SMA), a neuromuscular disease, Cure SMA respectfully request your support in fully funding the airport accessibility pilot program in the fiscal year 2025 Transportation-HUD Appropriations bill. This crucial program, which was established through Section 725 of the FAA Reauthorization Act (PL 118-63), aims to enhance air travel accessibility for passengers with SMA and other disabilities by undertaking capital projects to upgrade the accessibility of commercial service airports.

Air travel poses numerous challenges for individuals with SMA and other disabilities, particularly those who travel with customized wheelchairs. These difficulties start at the airport with inadequate bathrooms, limited elevators, and other barriers. An **adult with SMA** who requires the assistance of a caregiver described indignities he has faced when airport bathrooms are not designed with a person with disability in mind and lack an adult changing table. *"I have had many experiences where public accommodations were not sufficient, and the only available surface large enough was the floor. Floors are not comfortable or hygienic and provide unnecessary discomfort and risk of harm or infection."* In addition, many airports lack adequate wheelchair lifts, power outlets for charging powered wheelchairs, and other amenities to make air travel safer and more dignified for passengers with disabilities.

Congress recognized the challenges faced by people with disabilities at airports by authorizing the Sec. 725 pilot program for airport accessibility. Under the law, the Secretary of Transportation can award grants to fund airport upgrades to improve the experiences of individuals with SMA and other disabilities, including:

- **Upgrading Bathrooms:** Ensuring that these facilities are accessible and equipped to meet the needs of all passengers.
- **Expanding Elevator Access:** Installing additional elevators, including those capable of moving power wheelchairs to aircraft.
- **Improving Terminal Accessibility:** Increasing the availability of accessible seating and power outlets for durable medical equipment, such as powered wheelchairs.



- **Disability Advisory Committee:** Establishing a disability advisory committee for hub airports.
- **Personal, Infrastructure, and Technology:** Improving resources available to passengers related to disability self-identification and requesting assistance.

These airport enhancements would greatly increase accessibility and reduce barriers experienced by individuals with SMA and their caregivers during air travel. Cure SMA respectfully asks that you prioritize funding for the airport accessibility pilot program in the FY 2025 Transportation-HUD bill to create a more inclusive and accessible air travel experience for all individuals with disabilities. Thank you for your consideration. Your staff can contact Sarah Bellig, Manager of Policy and Advocacy at Cure SMA, at 202-871-8005 or sarah.bellig@curesma.org if they have questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

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

Kenneth Hobby
President
Cure SMA