



July 19, 2023

Dear Member of Congress:

On behalf of the American Society of Travel Advisors (ASTA) and the more than 160,000 Americans who work in the travel agency sector across the country, I am writing to express our unequivocal support for the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act (H.R. 3935), bipartisan legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and related aviation programs for the next five years. We ask for your vote of support when it comes before the House this week.

Responsible for the sale of roughly half of air travel in the U.S., travel advisors – online, brick-and-mortar or hybrid business models in between – serve an indispensable role in our country’s commercial aviation system and the broader travel and tourism industry. In 2019, travel agencies sold nearly 830,000 airline tickets *per day*, representing 48 percent of total sales and aggregate spending of more than \$97 billion.¹

H.R. 3935 includes many of the provisions for which ASTA has been advocating on behalf of our members since the beginning of the year – and in some cases far longer. While comprehensive in scope, the bill recognizes the invaluable role travel advisors play in the larger travel and tourism ecosystem while serving as a key voice for consumers.

The following provisions would particularly benefit travel agencies, individual travel advisors and other similarly situated third-party intermediaries that make up ASTA’s membership and are regulated by the Department of Transportation (DOT):

- **Travel Agency Seat on DOT Consumer Protection Advisory Committee (Section 704)** – Adds a seat for “ticket agents and travel management companies” to the DOT’s Aviation Consumer Protection Advisory Committee, based on freestanding legislation (H.R. 3780) introduced by Rep. Dina Titus (D-NV). This provision will provide valuable insights that are missing today and help the Department meet its consumer protection mission.
- **New Consumer Advisory Committee, including Travel Agencies (Section 708)** – Creates a new “Passenger Experience Advisory Committee” at DOT, with a seat for ticket agents among its membership. The goal of the committee would be to advise the Secretary of Transportation on ways to improve the passenger experience in air transportation customer service, via biennial reports.
- **Disclosures in Offline Ticket Transactions (Section 709)** – Requires DOT to implement a streamlined system for fulfilling air consumer disclosure requirements during “offline” transactions (over-the-phone, face-to-face) within 18 months of enactment. For more on the

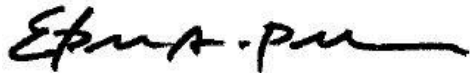
¹ Airlines Reporting Corporation (ARC). [Airline Sales Statistics](#).

challenges faced by travel advisors regarding the multiple disclosures they are required by law and regulation to make today and justification for Section 709, see ASTA's February submission² to the committees of jurisdiction.

- **Travel Agency Refund Obligations (Section 710)** – Makes clear that a travel agency's obligation to issue a client refund for a cancelled or significantly changed flight is limited to scenarios where it is in possession of the funds in question, which addresses ASTA's concern with regard to a separate, pending DOT rulemaking on airline refunds.³

We appreciate the time and effort that went into this comprehensive, bipartisan bill as well as the collaborative approach taken in terms of stakeholder feedback. We vigorously support the bill and request your vote of support. If you or your staff have any questions on this legislation or any issues impacting our travel advisor membership, please don't hesitate to contact me at (703) 739-6842 or epeck@asta.org.

Yours Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eben Peck".

Eben Peck
Executive Vice President, Advocacy

² American Society of Travel Advisors. [ASTA to House & Senate Authorizing Committees re: FAA Reauthorization](#). February 24, 2023.

³ American Society of Travel Advisors. [Travel Advisors to DOT: Don't Put Us on the Hook for Airline Cancellations](#) [Press Release]. December 14, 2022.