



January 7, 2014

Dear Senator:

As you consider fiscal year 2014 omnibus appropriations legislation, we respectfully ask that you oppose efforts by the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to open a Customs and Border Protection (CBP) preclearance facility at the Abu Dhabi International Airport in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

A CBP preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi is not a prudent use of U.S. taxpayer dollars. Preclearance is designed to make air travel more convenient and efficient by allowing passengers to clear U.S. customs at their place of departure, typically foreign destinations served by U.S. airlines. Unlike the 15 existing preclearance facilities located in Canada, Ireland and the Caribbean, *no* U.S. passenger airline currently provides direct scheduled service between the United States and Abu Dhabi. And yet, DHS appears intent on opening a preclearance facility at an airport from which one foreign airline competitor provides just three daily flights to the United States.

The U.S. airline industry plays a critical role in the U.S. economy, driving nearly 10 million U.S. jobs and \$1 trillion in annual economic activity. However, U.S. airlines are facing strong competitive headwinds in the global marketplace due to direct and indirect financial and policy support that foreign airline competitors receive from their respective governments. Our own government should not exacerbate this competitive imbalance by opening a preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi, which will solely benefit a foreign airline that competes with U.S. airlines not just for travel between the United States and Middle East, but also for transit from key emerging markets, including India and Asia. In this respect, opening a preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi would provide a competitive advantage to a foreign airline competitor at the expense of the U.S. aviation industry and its workers.

Moreover, when customs wait times at major U.S. airports can exceed several hours during peak travel periods, DHS should not be using any resources to open new preclearance facilities overseas. Excessively long customs wait times discourage international travel to the United States and lower demand for international flights on U.S. airlines, thereby costing U.S. airlines and the U.S. economy billions of dollars in lost revenue. Reducing wait times at U.S. airports should take priority over expansion of CBP preclearance facilities at foreign airports, particularly at those locations not served by U.S. airlines.

We appreciate that Congress has taken action in opposition to planned CBP preclearance in Abu Dhabi in both the Consolidated and Further Continuing Appropriations Act of 2013 (P.L. 113-6,

Section 560(f)) and the House version of the FY 2014 Department of Homeland Security appropriations legislation (H.R. 2217). However, we are dismayed that DHS is finalizing plans to open a preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi, perhaps as early as this month.

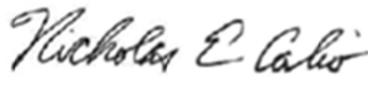
Given the adverse economic consequences that would result from opening a CBP preclearance facility in Abu Dhabi and the significant federal budget constraints, we respectfully ask that you to support a funding prohibition on the Abu Dhabi preclearance facility in any final FY 2014 appropriations package.

Thank you for your commitment to U.S. airlines, the U.S. travel industry and U.S. aviation industry workers.

Sincerely,



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President & CEO, Airlines for
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Mark Richardson
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