



AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL

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THE WORLD'S LARGEST PILOTS UNION | WWW.ALPA.ORG

December 9, 2020

The Honorable Roger Wicker
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Deb Fischer
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairs Wicker and Fischer and Ranking Members Cantwell and Duckworth,

As you discuss the important topic of safely transporting the COVID-19 vaccine, I respectfully provide the views of the more than 59,000 professional airline pilots represented by the Air Line Pilots Association, International (ALPA). Since the beginning of the pandemic, ALPA members at passenger and cargo carriers have been on the front lines transporting essential workers and personal protective equipment and are now flying the vaccine from manufacturing plants around the world.

The ability for our nation's airlines to deliver safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines where they are needed reinforces the vital importance of air transportation—and of the pilots and other workers who make it possible. However, with tens of thousands of aviation workers currently furloughed, widespread distribution remains threatened. Congress must finalize a deal now to extend the successful Payroll Support Program to ensure that airlines can quickly ramp up operations for vaccine distribution.

As vaccines make their way through the approval process and begin to be distributed to frontline health-care workers, ALPA urges Congress and the administration to recognize the essential role of airline pilots in the supply chain. Flight crews have already been deemed essential workers by the by Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency. It is critical that, following the initial distribution, airline pilots are provided priority access to the vaccine as well. As pilots continue the vital work of connecting our nation and transporting vital health care workers and products, our all-cargo flight crews, for example, have experienced an alarming increase in COVID-19 exposure and infections. Ensuring this prioritization will allow the logistical component of transporting the vaccine to continue unencumbered.

As you know, airline pilots are required to maintain medical certification from the FAA, but approval for use of the vaccine is required by the agency before it can be administered to flight crews. Receiving the COVID-19 vaccine before the FAA's approval could result in suspension of a pilot's medical certificate, creating potential staffing challenges that would threaten the efficiency of vaccine distribution across the United States. It is essential that the FAA approve this vaccine for

use by airline pilots as soon as possible following the Food and Drug Administration's Emergency Use Authorization to ensure that pilots who receive the vaccine will remain qualified to transport it nationwide.

Air transportation infrastructure is critical to getting our nation's economy back on track. ALPA members look forward to continuing to do their part to fight the pandemic by transporting the vaccine and providing the possibility of a healthy future. However, to ensure a robust supply chain, airline workers jobs must be protected through an extension of the Payroll Support Program, and our members must have access to the vaccine to maintain their own health and be granted the ability to receive the vaccine without risking their medical certification.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph G. DePete". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

Joseph G. DePete
President