



December 7, 2022

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senate  
524 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Duckworth:

AARP, on behalf of our nearly 38 million members and all older Americans nationwide, would like to thank you for your leadership in sponsoring legislation to update evacuation standards for transport category airplanes. Evacuation standards should protect all Americans, including those with mobility issues.

Safety is foremost in the minds of older travelers. We share your concern regarding the ability of older adults and persons with disabilities to safely and efficiently evacuate an airplane in the event of emergency. The time to ensure that passengers can perform a safe evacuation is before the need arises. To comply with the 90-second emergency airplane evacuation time currently mandated by federal regulation, it is essential that real world conditions are present when testing evacuation procedures, including the participation of older adults and persons with disabilities in those tests.

Over 25 million Americans have mobility issues that may affect their ability to access air travel without accommodation. And 40 percent of adults age 65 and older reported trouble with mobility (walking or climbing stairs) in 2019. As the population of older adults increases in the coming decades, the number of Americans with mobility issues is likely to increase.

A 2020 Department of Transportation Office of the Inspector General (OIG) report found that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) usually only updates evacuation standards after accidents have occurred, and the last such update occurred after an accident in 1991. The report further found that the FAA's process currently lacks data collection and analysis of current risks, such as how changes in passenger behavior, passenger demographics, and seating capacity since the 1991 update could affect those standards.

Thank you again for your leadership in sponsoring this important legislation to require an update to evacuation standards for airplanes. AARP looks forward to working with you to advance this legislation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me, or have your staff contact Debra Alvarez at (202) 434-3814.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Meg O'Reilly", is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Megan O'Reilly  
Acting Senior Vice President  
Government Affairs