



**U.S. Department
of Transportation**

Office of the Secretary
of Transportation

Assistant Secretary
for Governmental Affairs

1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

March 9, 2020

The Honorable Edward Markey
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Markey:

Thank you for your March 4, 2020, letter regarding fees for air travelers who change or cancel flights because of concerns about the coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak.

To understand airlines' activities with respect to fees during this outbreak, the Department of Transportation (the Department) has reviewed the ticketing policies of the largest U.S. and foreign airlines. We found that virtually all U.S. airlines have published specific policies related to COVID-19 that allow passengers greater flexibilities in changing or canceling tickets without penalty. For example, most U.S. carriers currently allow flight itinerary changes without a fee for all new ticket reservations made in March 2020. Many airlines also allow more flexibility on cancellations or changes for itineraries booked before March 2020 to countries and regions that are most impacted by the COVID-19 outbreak, such as China, Hong Kong, South Korea, and Italy. Among foreign carriers that serve routes between North America and countries with COVID-19 outbreaks in Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, our review revealed a general tendency to adopt a flexible change and cancellation policy.

The Department takes seriously its responsibility to protect aviation consumers. The Department has the authority to protect consumers from unfair or deceptive practices and to ensure safe and adequate service in air transportation. However, any action that the Department takes in this area would need to be consistent with the Airline Deregulation Act, which prohibits regulation of the prices, routes, and services of the domestic flights of U.S. airlines, and Open Skies agreements, which require the United States to allow airlines to establish prices for air transportation. The Department will continue to monitor and review carriers' policies to determine what action, if any, would be appropriate and of benefit to consumers.

A similar response has sent to Senator Warren.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam Sullivan".

Adam Sullivan
Assistant Secretary
Government Affairs