

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 18, 2019

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

RE: EAS Waiver Request by Hagerstown Regional Airport, Docket-DOT-OST-2006-25228

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write in strong support of Hagerstown Regional Airport's (HGR) request for waivers from Public Law 106-69; 113 Stat. 1022 and 49 U.S.C §41731(a)(1)(B). Under these statutes, airports in the Essential Air Service (EAS) Program must not exceed the maximum subsidy permissible per passenger of \$200 and average a minimum of ten (10) enplanements per day. On March 29, 2019, in Order 2019-3-15, the U.S. Department of Transportation tentatively determined that Hagerstown, Maryland did not enplane an average of 10 or more passengers per day during Fiscal Year 2018 as required by 49 U.S.C §41731(a)(1)(B) and tentatively decided to terminate eligibility of HGR. It is essential for the people of Western Maryland to have access to a regional airport to transport them to higher-density airports. Providing this waiver will allow HGR to continue providing this critical service to our constituents and will support economic growth.

The Hagerstown Regional Airport has improved service substantially since 2018 and is continuing to correct the operating circumstances that prevented compliance with the subsidy cap and 10-enplanement requirements. HGR is now under new management as of November 2018 that is prioritizing growth for EAS service through marketing and public awareness campaigns. Already, in the first quarter of 2019, Hagerstown averaged over ten enplaned passengers per day.

Southern Airways, which was re-selected to provide service at Hagerstown on March 28, 2019, has addressed service issues stemming from the national pilot shortage and launched interline service. In 2018, HGR worked with Southern Airways to help recruit qualified pilots to live in or near Hagerstown. In response to the pilot availability challenges HGR experienced in 2017, the airport made a commitment to help Southern Airways recruit and maintain a stable pilot workforce in the region that helped produce a near-100% controllable completion rate in Q1.

Launched in July 2018, Southern Airways fully implemented interline partnership with American Airlines in March 2019. HGR expects this expansion of service to significantly increase enplanements. In addition, Southern Airways entered its second year of an interline agreement with European air carrier Condor Airlines in Fiscal Year 2018. The second-largest carrier in Germany serving 90 destinations worldwide, Condor Airlines has placed local marketing support in Hagerstown for enhanced international service to European destinations.

Separately, we note that in Fiscal Year 2018 the subsidy-per-passenger in Hagerstown was significantly less than that of the subsidy paid in Fiscal Year 2015. We therefore respectfully urge you based on that finding to grant HGR's request for wavier from the \$200 subsidy cap.

These exciting developments and improvements highlight HGR's and Southern Airways's commitment to improve service and meet the requirements to allow them to reach compliance. We fully support HGR's request for waivers from the 10 enplanement-per-day and \$200 subsidy-per-passenger requirements and ask that all due consideration be given to this request.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



David Trone
Member of Congress