

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 21, 2026

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Ave, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Secretary Duffy and Administrator Bedford:

I write regarding efforts to advance access to commercial air travel for Americans with disabilities and deployment of in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems in airline fleets.

As you may know, air travel can be challenging for the 5 to 6 million Americans who use wheelchairs in everyday life. Current regulations in most cases require wheelchair users to transfer out of their wheelchairs into a standard passenger seat, and to stow their wheelchairs onboard. I have spoken to many wheelchair users throughout New Jersey who fear the risk of their wheelchairs being damaged or lost in transit. Others highlight unique physical needs that can make transferring out of the wheelchair painful or impossible. While airlines, in partnership with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), have made strides in improving crew training and cargo handling practices to ease this process, travel remains functionally inaccessible to many wheelchair users, whose specialized wheelchairs or unique physical needs make leaving their chair impractical. This is why I was pleased to learn about progress in the efforts to install safe and reliable in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems.

In 2018, and again in 2024, Congress authorized reports and task forces to study and report on the path forward to advancing these in-cabin restraint systems to ease access to air travel for wheelchair users. Pursuant to Section 432 of the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018*, the Transportation Research Board (TRB) reported, in part, that the technology for in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems that can meet FAA standards appears technically feasible, and that it could plausibly be implemented in commercial airline cabins with the proper development and evaluation¹. More recently, Section 544(e) of the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024* authorized the creation of a “roadmap” for successful deployment of in-cabin wheelchair restraint systems into commercial service. I am encouraged to hear that the Department of Transportation’s Office of the Secretary (OST) will initiate this report.

With these accessibility needs and legislative authorizations in mind, I respectfully request your engagement on the path forward to ensuring all Americans, regardless of physical ability, are able to access air travel without undue hardship. To that end, I respectfully request that you provide the following information:

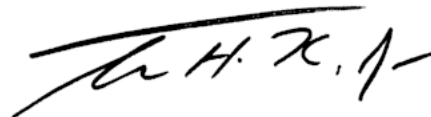
1. Can you provide an update on when OST plans to initiate and complete the report required by Section 544(e) of the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*?

Transportation Research Board, *Technical Feasibility of a Wheelchair Securement Concept for Airline Travel: A Preliminary Assessment*, Special Report 341 (Washington, D.C.: National Academy of Sciences, 2021), p. 6-7, <https://www.access-board.gov/files/research/trb-final-report-sept2021.pdf>.

2. Can you provide an update on FAA research on deployment of in-cabin wheelchair restraints, including a timeline for completion, barriers affecting the process, and additional research needed to meet the crashworthiness standards?
3. What actions can Congress undertake to assist the DOT and FAA in developing feasible regulations to allow deployment of in-cabin wheelchair restraints as soon as possible?
4. What additional training would be needed to ensure cabin crews can safely operate wheelchair restraint technologies?
5. What training and standard practices are needed to ensure all wheelchair users are treated with respect?

Thank you for your commitment to ensuring a high level of service, safety, and reliability in our nation's air travel system. I offer my partnership in this effort and look forward to your response and continued dialogue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "T. H. Kean, Jr.", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Thomas H. Kean, Jr.
Member of Congress