

Thank you Chair Cantwell, Ranking Member Cruz, Chair Duckworth, and Ranking Member Moran for the opportunity to testify today.

As President of the Association of Flight Attendants I am proud to represent 50,000 Flight Attendants at 19 airlines, ground staff and gate agents represented by our partner union the Communications Workers of America.

As Flight Attendants, our work space is a passenger's travel space. We have a long history of fighting for consumer rights because our lives depend on addressing passengers' issues too.

Since deregulation, mergers have been common and typically wreaked havoc on our job security, years of service to our airlines, pay, pensions, and working conditions. We believe anti-trust review is critical for workers and passengers. But there has been very little limits on consolidation and today we have only four airlines that control 81 percent of the market.

Our union has direct experience with eight mergers in the past decade, and I personally have experience with more than a dozen proposed mergers - some that our union fought to block. We have never before enthusiastically endorsed a merger, but that is our position today with the proposed JetBlue-Spirit combination.

We believe the pro-competition stance of this White House together with your critical eyes as lawmakers, the outcry from consumers, and the effective work of our aviation unions led JetBlue to design a merger plan that can actually begin to correct the unchecked consolidation of the past decade. This is the anti-merger, merger.

Safety and Comfort. All Spirit airplanes will be reconfigured from 28 inch seat pitch, which is the worst in the industry, to 32 inch seat pitch which is the best minimum standard in the industry. The result is a far better ratio of gate agents and Flight Attendant to passengers. Bigger seats, free wifi, unlimited snacks, and the option to forgo all of that

for even lower fares if passengers so choose. This would help to address concerns we share with Senator Duckworth about safe evacuations. We were proud to endorse the Emergency Vacating of Aircraft Cabin (EVAC) Act in the last Congress, and we look forward to the reintroduction in this Congress for inclusion in the FAA Reauthorization Bill.

No Two-Tiered Employment. This merger will in-source jobs currently contracted out at Spirit to make all of these aviation workers direct employees of JetBlue with higher pay and benefits. The airline will not use any contract flying with regional jets, a practice that the major airlines utilize to keep labor costs on average 45% less than mainline airlines for nearly half of the domestic flights in their network.

More, Better Jobs. JetBlue has committed to no furloughs, no displacements, and an expedited joint contract bargaining process that will ensure Flight Attendants gain the benefits of the merger as soon as possible. Adding another carrier that must participate in collective bargaining to the industry's

highest standards increases the rate at which workers can improve the value of our jobs, tackle economy-wide inequality, and spend more on goods and services in our communities.

Maintain/Expand Service to our Communities.

Combining JetBlue and Spirit creates a network that can expand service beyond what either airline can do alone.

Failing to settle this case will do nothing to change today's industry dynamics, but it will ensure things stay the same. There's not a person in the country who would say that's okay. Everything the public hates about flying today would be better at the merged airline.

We urge lawmakers to encourage the Administration to resolve any concerns with the merger and enable workers and consumers alike to experience its benefits as soon as possible.

We address many recommendations in our written testimony for a safer cabin and better passenger experience. These are joint priorities with our sister union the Association of Professional Flight Attendants. But let me close with this:

With nearly 80 years of experience and heart in aviation, the members of the Association of Flight Attendants know the realities of the aircraft cabin better than anyone.

We don't just serve drinks. We save lives.

We don't just negotiate contracts. We move major policy issues like the smoking ban, no knives on planes, clean water and safe food onboard.

The air we breathe matters, and we must ensure there's always a safe seat for even our smallest passengers.

Training, rest, and adequate staffing matters as we fight fires, deescalate conflict, revive and breathe life.

We safely usher passengers to the big business deal, the family vacation, the times of celebration, times of grief and times of battle.

We are aviation's first responders and we are the last line of defense in aviation security.

We are the first impression and the smile of aviation connecting the people of our nations.

Aviation has a long history of collaboration among government, industry, unions, scientists, and consumers. This collaboration and careful approach to layered safety, security, health, and inclusion has built the safest mode of transportation, the backbone of the American economy, and the access that we enjoy around the world. We look forward to working with this committee to continue our shared responsibility.

Fly with us. Make progress with us. We are Stronger Together and Better Together.