

**SHARICE DAVIDS**

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COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND  
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COMMITTEE ON SMALL BUSINESS

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May 19, 2020

Blane Workie  
Assistant General Counsel  
Office of Aviation Enforcement and Proceedings  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE  
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Ms. Workie,

As I'm sure you are aware, commercial airline passenger ticket cancellations have spiked recently due to concerns about the spread of COVID-19, as well as an uptick in carrier-cancelled flights. With an increased number of passengers seeking relief, it's come to my attention that obtaining refunds from airlines for these cancelled flights has become difficult.

I understand that the Department of Transportation has issued multiple warnings to airlines on this matter due in no small measure to the 16.5-times increase in consumer complaints you have reportedly received. I appreciate your work to ensure that regulations are being enforced and asking that airlines revisit their customer service policies.

Reports have emerged, however, of loopholes in Department of Transportation guidance to airlines, including "exclusions for flights that have not been canceled, 'nonrefundable fares,' and bookings made through third parties such as online travel agencies."<sup>1</sup> This has left consumers jumping through hoops to receive refunds or in some cases being forced to accept vouchers instead of a deserved refund. These vouchers do not help the millions of Americans who are out of work and need money to pay their bills.

As passenger-cancelled fares and carrier-cancelled flights continue during this pandemic, I ask that you share what further steps the Department of Transportation intends to take in order to guarantee consumers aren't adversely affected by this unique circumstance outside their control.

Specifically, what guidance does the Department plan to put forward to make sure that the regulations surrounding these types of refunds are adhered to? Furthermore, what further remedies exist beyond warnings from the Department should refunds continue to stall?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.dallasnews.com/business/airlines/2020/05/12/passengers-still-complaining-that-airlines-wont-give-refunds-for-canceled-flights/>

I appreciate your attention to this matter and for your continued service during the current crisis.

My Warmest Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'S. Davids', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Sharice L. Davids  
Member of Congress