

United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA) Supports The Air Carrier Amendments Act (H.R. 1267/S. 545)

BACKGROUND

The Americans with Disabilities Act **does not** cover disability rights in air travel. In 1986 President Ronald Reagan signed the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA) into law. Despite the provision of the ACAA that prohibits disability-based discrimination in air transportation, many passengers with disabilities continue to have challenging and frustrating experiences. They experience significant barriers to and with traveling by air such as damaged assistive devices, inaccessible restrooms, inappropriate treatment of service animals and inadequate disability awareness and sensitivity training of airline and contractor personnel.

Furthermore, enforcement of ACAA protections is limited to administrative action and civil fines. Unlike most other civil rights laws, the ACAA lacks a guaranteed private right of action; that is the ability to sue in court. Consequently, people with disabilities typically receive little if any compensation for personal injury or damaged property such as wheelchairs.

Not all disabilities are visible. People living with an ostomy, which is a physical impairment that affects daily living and requires a prosthetic to replace the function of the bowel or bladder, are a hidden disability group. We believe all airline personnel should receive sensitivity and awareness training on medical conditions that might need urgent access to a restroom during a flight. Lack of access to one during an unexpected pouch leak can result in an embarrassing and unnecessary accident. Additionally, it is important for the ostomy community to have access to airline lavatories that provide accommodations (such as a shelf to place their medical supplies) for emptying/changing/disposing of an ostomy pouch and/or catheter in a safe and clean environment.

Every five years, Congress must renew the authorization for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This provides an opportunity for federal lawmakers to examine the airline industry and propose any reforms or updates. The current authorization expires at the end of September 2023, so Congress is preparing to write a new 5-year authorization bill and vote on it in the coming months.

Representative Dina Titus (D-NV- 1) and Senator Tammy Baldwin (D-WI) have introduced the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act (H.R. 1267/S. 545) which is a bill to protect the rights of passengers with disabilities in air transportation. The Act calls for improved air travel safety, accessibility and accountability.

CALL TO ACTION

United Ostomy Associations of America (UOAA) is a national nonprofit organization whose mission is to improve quality of life for people living with an ostomy or continent diversion. As the leading organization advocating for this community, we strive to protect their rights and ensure equal access. No person living with an ostomy should ever be discouraged from traveling, whether for work, to see family and friends, take a vacation, or go on a journey around the world.

The ACAA must be updated to improve access to air transportation for individuals with disabilities. UOAA joins with other patient and disability organizations to support the Air Carrier Access Amendments Act of 2023 (H.R. 1267/S. 545). We request that members of Congress co-sponsor and pass H.R. 1267/S. 545 to protect the rights of passengers with disabilities in air travel.