

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 12, 2017

Chairman John Thune
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Ranking Member Bill Nelson
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science,
and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

I write to you today to respectfully request that the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, which has jurisdiction over aviation issues, hold a hearing to further examine the issues raised from the forced removal of a passenger on a United Express flight. As a member of the Committee and a senator representing a state where air travel is critical to Nevada's tourism economy, I want to ensure that airline passengers are not discouraged from air travel and understand all the facts and circumstances surrounding this incident.

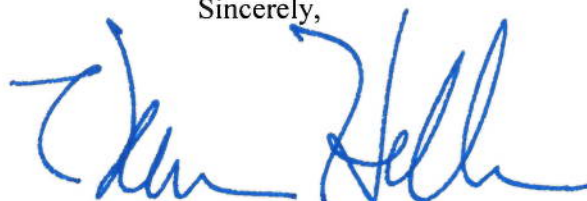
Like many Americans, the recent forced removal of a passenger on a United Express flight out of Chicago-O'Hare (ORD) airport was truly disturbing and does not reflect how consumers expect to be treated when airlines are experiencing overbookings or other issues that may result in passengers giving up their seat. I appreciate your efforts as Chairman and Ranking Member to pursue answers from both United Airlines, Inc. and the Chicago Department of Aviation about the events that transpired. It is clear to me there were many alternatives that were not adequately pursued and could have prevented the forced removal that left the passenger in terrible condition.

Tourism is one of the economic drivers in my home of Nevada. Since coming to Congress, I have advocated for policies that help facilitate safer and more efficient travel to Nevada. As the committee of jurisdiction for this issue, I believe that we need to do all that we can to ensure that we continue to provide a robust and competitive environment for tourism within the United States while also providing appropriate consumer safeguards.

Given the seriousness of what happened and how it could impact travel and tourism in my state and many other states, I believe it is critical that the Committee have relevant witnesses testify about how to protect airline customers from situations such as this moving forward—whether it is through revised policies from the airlines, better communication with passengers, or compliance with any existing Department of Transportation (DOT) rules. Furthermore, with the DOT initiating its own inquiry into this matter, the Committee should fully exercise its role of Congressional oversight.

Again, I appreciate your consideration of this request and look forward to continuing our work together on the Committee to ensure safe and efficient air travel for all Americans.

Sincerely,



DEAN HELLER
U.S. Senator