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May 5, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Subject: Urgent Need to Review In-Flight Medical Equipment and Crew Training Standards

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I appreciate the work that your department is doing to modernize our federal transportation infrastructure. However, I am writing to express growing concern over the state of medical preparedness aboard commercial aircraft in light of a recent emergency that underscores the critical gaps in equipment reliability and crew training. Recent incidents have highlighted potential shortcomings that, if unaddressed, could jeopardize passenger safety.

On February 5, 2025, Dr. Jacquelyn Lacera—a physician and constituent residing in my congressional district—suffered a serious cardiac event aboard an American Airlines flight from Hawaii to Los Angeles. Fortunately, another medical professional, physician assistant Emily Haley, was onboard to intervene. However, the plane's pulse oximeter and glucose monitor were non-functional, the stethoscope was damaged, and flight attendants were slow to retrieve the AED. Dr. Lacera had to be shocked back to stability without sedation—a traumatic and unnecessary escalation in part due to the lack of functioning resources.

This incident underscores the critical importance of ensuring that all emergency medical equipment is not only present but also fully operational, and that flight crews are adequately trained to respond to medical emergencies. The Aviation Medical Assistance Act of 1998 mandates that airlines carry functional defibrillators and that flight attendants are trained to use them. While airlines may meet the minimum Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) requirements, those standards are outdated given the realities of modern travel—especially for older or medically vulnerable passengers.

In light of these concerns, I respectfully urge the Department of Transportation to:

1. Review and modernize FAA regulations regarding in-flight medical kits to ensure equipment is high-quality, up-to-date, and fully functional.

2. Standardize medical training for flight crews across airlines, including minimum instructional hours and competencies in responding to cardiovascular emergencies.
3. Mandate periodic inspections and audits of emergency equipment on commercial aircraft to ensure operational readiness.
4. Encourage or implement programs like those used in European carriers, where medical professionals can register as emergency responders and receive airline-specific training.

Ensuring the safety and well-being of airline passengers must remain a paramount priority. By addressing these critical issues, the Department can help prevent future tragedies and reinforce public confidence in air travel.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I am available to discuss this further and provide any additional information you may require.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ken Calvert", written over a horizontal line.

KEN CALVERT
Member of Congress