United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 9, 2024

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair Senate Commerce, Science, and
Transportation Committee
254 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz
Ranking Member Senate Commerce,
Science and Transportation Committee
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz,

This year, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee included important language to support Essential Air Service in rural communities in S. 1939, the Federal Aviation Reauthorization Act of 2024. As the Senate and House progress in negotiations to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I urge you to prioritize maintaining the Senate provisions of Essential Air Service in any package that advances to the floor.

Of particular concern is the inclusion of cost-share language within the House bill, which would enforce a 5 percent cost-share beginning in fiscal year 2027 for Essential Air Service (EAS) airports. Such an amendment would have detrimental effects on numerous EAS-served communities, potentially jeopardizing their access to essential air services. I urge you to uphold the Senate's version of the EAS language during conference with the House and ensure it is maintained in the final bill.

Since its inception in 1978, the EAS program has been a critical resource for the nation in linking rural communities with major markets and economic opportunities. Additionally, it provides residents of our rural areas with transportation options on which families rely. These airports are imperative to rural communities, where public transportation options are limited compared to their urban counterparts.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter. We look forward to working with you to ensure rural communities continue to have access to vital commercial air transportation services.

Sincerely,

Deb Fischer
United States Senator

Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator

Roger F. Wicker
United States Senator

Marsha Blackburn
United States Senator