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News Releases

Klobuchar, Warner Join Flight Attendants, Law Enforcement & Anti-Trafficking Advocates at National Airport to Call on Congress to Combat Human Trafficking on Commercial Air Flights

May 16, 2016

Senate-passed FAA bill includes Klobuchar-Warner provision to require training for flight attendants on how to recognize & report suspected human trafficking

Washington – Today, U.S. Sens. Amy Klobuchar (D-MN) and Mark R. Warner (D-VA) joined flight attendants, anti-trafficking advocates, and federal law enforcement at Ronald Reagan National Airport to urge Congress to pass legislation that would help to combat human trafficking on commercial air flights.

By a bipartisan vote of 95-3, the Senate last month approved legislation reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) that includes a provision championed by Sens. Klobuchar and Warner to combat human trafficking in the skies. The legislation – modeled on the [*Stop Trafficking on Planes \(STOP\) Act*](#) that the Senators introduced earlier this year – requires airlines to provide training for flight attendants to recognize and report suspected human trafficking to law enforcement. Sens. Warner and Klobuchar worked to [include](#) language modeled on the STOP Act in the FAA bill because flight attendants, through their interactions with large numbers of air travelers, are uniquely positioned to identify potential victims and help bring human traffickers to justice.

“Trafficking is now estimated to be the third largest criminal enterprise in the world. We need to ensure that flight attendants who are on the frontlines of the battle against trafficking are armed with the proper training needed to identify and report these heinous crimes,” Sen. Klobuchar said. **“By working together to move our bill forward, we can help stop trafficking wherever it exists – on land, at sea, and in the sky.”**

“Hundreds of thousands of people in the United States are estimated to be victims of human trafficking, but too often, they are hidden in plain sight. Bringing traffickers to

justice and helping victims to safety requires a concerted effort. We need to use all available resources to assist law enforcement in identifying and protecting those who are being exploited. Fortunately, we have allies in the sky who are uniquely positioned to spot and report suspected cases of human trafficking,” said Sen. Warner. “With appropriate training in how to notice common signs of trafficking – such as a traveling companion who keeps physical control of a fellow traveler’s documents, or a child who is accompanied by an adult who isn’t a parent or guardian – flight attendants can help magnify our efforts to combat this crime. I hope that the House of Representatives will act on the FAA bill soon, so that we can move one step closer to saving more women and children from becoming victims of exploitation.”

“CBP is uniquely positioned to recognize and intercept human traffickers and, hopefully, rescue their victims as they travel through our ports of entry and across our borders,” said U.S. Customs and Border Protection Commissioner R. Gil Kerlikowske. “It takes a whole of community approach to combat human trafficking, which is why we value our partnerships with the airline industry as well as federal, state, and local governments, private sector businesses, nonprofit organizations and service providers.”

“Trained Flight Attendants can serve as 100,000 eyes in the skies to save lives by recognizing and reporting signs of trafficking,” said Sara Nelson, international president of the Association of Flight Attendants-CWA. “We join Senator Klobuchar and Senator Warner to call on Congress to move this legislation that will allow us to stop traffickers from using our skyways as a means to transport innocents to a life of slavery.”

"Human trafficking victims are often isolated and there are few opportunities for intervention. Airlines are on the front lines of stopping this by identifying victims who are being transported,” said Michelle Guelbart, Director of Private Sector Engagement, ECPAT-USA. “They may also overhear international child sex tourists or abusers who talk about exploiting local children while traveling domestically in the United States. ECPAT-USA applauds Senator Klobuchar and Senator Warner for their leadership in introducing this legislation and know that when passed, will literally change lives."

The legislation builds on the voluntary Blue Lightning Initiative (BLI) currently administered by the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Transportation. BLI provides training and educational materials for U.S. commercial airlines and their employees on how to identify suspected human trafficking victims and notify federal authorities.

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