



August 13, 2020

Senator Jeff Merkley  
313 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Merkley:

The National Disability Rights Network (NDRN) and Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) would like to thank you for introducing the Maintaining Important Distance During Lengthy Epidemics (MIDDLE) Act of 2020. NDRN and Disability Rights Oregon applaud the introduction of this bill as it will help protect those traveling by air, including individuals with disabilities, during this unprecedented time.

NDRN is the voluntary membership association for Protection and Advocacy (P&A) and Client Assistance Program (CAP) agencies. The P&A and CAP agencies are a nationwide network of congressionally mandated, cross disability organizations operating in every state in the United States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Territories (American Samoa, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, and the US Virgin Islands). There is also a P&A and CAP affiliated with the Native American Consortium which includes the Hopi, Navajo, and San Juan Southern Paiute Nations located in the Four Corners region of the Southwest.

Disability Rights Oregon (DRO) is a statewide nonprofit that upholds the civil rights of 950,000 people with disabilities in Oregon to live, work, and engage in the community. Since 1977, DRO has served as Oregon's federally authorized and funded Protection & Advocacy System. DRO is committed to ensuring the civil rights of all people are protected and enforced.

NDRN and DRO are in full support of this bill because it will help ensure all individuals, especially individuals with disabilities, are better protected against possible coronavirus infection should they decide to travel by air. Wearing masks and adhering to social distancing guidelines are the most effective infection mitigation technique we have right now and both techniques undoubtedly save lives. People with disabilities have been disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 and thus effective measures to prevent spread are of utmost importance. We commend your leadership in this area to better ensure safe air travel as the pandemic runs its course.

Again, NDRN and DRO would like to thank you for introducing this bill. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact Cyrus Huncharek, Public Policy Analyst, at [cyrus.huncharek@ndrn.org](mailto:cyrus.huncharek@ndrn.org) or Jake Cornett at [jcornett@droregon.org](mailto:jcornett@droregon.org).

Sincerely,



Curtis L. Decker  
Executive Director, NDRN



Jake Cornett  
Executive Director, DRO