



March 12, 2020

The Honorable Susan Collins  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and  
Urban Development and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and  
Urban Development and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable David Price  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and  
Urban Development and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Transportation, Housing and  
Urban Development and Related Agencies  
Committee on Appropriations  
United States House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Collins, Ranking Member Reed, Chairman Price and Ranking Member Diaz-Balart:

When Congress deregulated the airline industry in 1978 and allowed air carriers to determine which markets they would serve, they also created the Essential Air Service (EAS) program so that small communities throughout the United States could maintain a minimal level of scheduled passenger air service. The undersigned groups **write to tell you that this program remains just as critical today and urge the Senate and House Appropriations Committees to provide full funding to the EAS program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2021 Transportation, Housing & Urban Development (T-HUD) Appropriations Bill.**

According to the Department of Transportation (DOT), approximately 170 communities in 36 states and territories throughout the country participate in the EAS program. The EAS program is funded by the Airport and Airway Trust Fund and fees from foreign airlines overflying the United States – not the General Fund. Over the years, the program has undergone significant evolution, including important eligibility adjustments aimed at directing resources where they are most needed.

Airports in small communities act as economic generators for the entire region. In 2017, a DOT Working Group – established by Congress and comprised of 25 small community air service subject matter experts from across 15 states – declared EAS “the backbone of small community air service” and implored policymakers to protect it. The Working Group’s report framed the importance of EAS by

detailing economic impact studies of two Essential Air Service Airports (Clarksburg, West Virginia and Kearney, Nebraska). On average, EAS service in those communities generated 23 local full time equivalent (FTE) direct jobs and 31 indirect local FTE jobs. Local annual payroll averaged \$1.1 million and total annual local economic output averaged \$4.1 million.

Additionally, analysis by the Regional Air Service Alliance estimated that airports supported by EAS leveraged \$2 billion in economic activity. The Alliance also conservatively estimated that the economic impact of air service at small and non-hub airports was \$134 billion and supported more than 1 million jobs that generated \$36 billion in wages and commensurate tax revenue in 2017.

We appreciate your strong support for the EAS program in the past and ask that it continue in the FY 2021 T-HUD bill.

Sincerely,

Airports Council International – North America  
American Association of Airport Executives  
National Association of Counties  
Regional Airline Association