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December 13, 2021

The Honorable Senator Maria Cantwell
Chairwoman
Committee on Commerce, Science, &
Transportation
United States Senate
253 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Senator Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, &
Transportation
United States Senate
253 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairwoman Cantwell & Ranking Member Wicker:

Airline Employees 4 Health Freedom (AE4HF.org) was formed by Captains Laura Cox and Sherry Walker along with Danielle Runyan, Esq. (the wife of a Captain). The organization began as a group of faithful United Airlines employees determined to exercise their rights to reasonable accommodations in lieu of mandatory Covid vaccinations under Title VII and under the Americans with Disabilities Act to protect their medical autonomy. Today, as our membership approaches 4000, we represent people of all faiths across the transportation industry including airline, rail and trucking firms.

As your committee convenes a hearing this week to examine the state of the airline industry's workforce, operational performance, and use of CARES Act resources, we hope United Airlines CEO Scott Kirby will speak to his decisions to fire so many faithful and loyal employees. He has terminated or indefinitely grounded over 2000 pilots, flight attendants, ramp workers, customer service agents, mechanics, managers, and others who seek to uphold their faith and their health through the protected Title VII process because it interferes with his marketing scheme to make United the first 100% vaccinated airline.

It is no secret the airline industry is struggling to meet heavy travel demands this holiday season. Yet, while no other air carrier has fired or punished employees due to their vaccination status Mr. Kirby continues terminating employees almost daily. His [intolerance](#) toward United employees of faith is unacceptable.

Last week, the Senate [voted](#) to end mandatory Covid vaccinations. Last month, Florida's Gov. DeSantis [signed](#) a law prohibiting employers from terminating or effectively terminating employees who seek reasonable accommodations. Large corporations across the nation are ending their Covid related regulations. Yet, as we write, Scott Kirby continues to claim he and his airline are not subject to the lawful Executive Order of Texas Governor Abbott or the laws of the State of Florida.

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"If not me, then who? If not now, then when?"

It appears he has the same lack of respect for his employees and his passengers as he continues to promote his nasty, needless fight with thousands of employees while the flying public suffers.

This holiday season, United employees are faced with an untenable choice: violate their faith or lose their jobs. After American taxpayers sent billions in payroll support to the airline industry, United, a huge beneficiary of those tax dollars, is violating the rights of the very people Congress was trying to save. It seems CEO Kirby has forgotten that CARES Act money was allocated to preserve airline industry jobs, not ground them.

Mr. Kirby claims his reasoning is centered around safety and science. Yet, multiple scientific studies show that the risk of Covid transmission onboard aircraft is [virtually nonexistent](#). In fact, Mr. Kirby's airline cited these facts in [United's promotional videos](#) throughout the pandemic, well before vaccines were available.

So why won't Scott Kirby address the obvious? He could immediately return his workers to flight status solving his employee shortage problem while saving the taxpayers billions. No other airline has grounded workers due to their vaccination status, so why is he?

We also request that you ask him why the same employees who worked on the front line throughout the pandemic are being retaliated against for requesting reasonable accommodations in accordance with civil rights laws? As if taking their pay is not enough, it appears Mr. Kirby is intent on **destroying** those who do not blindly follow his edicts.

For example, in addition to placing his workers on unpaid leave, Mr. Kirby refuses to allow employees to seek replacement employment in the airline industry. Few can afford the full price of insurance which is topping \$3000/month. Industrious folks have even tried to gain funds by refinancing their homes but were denied because they are classified as active employees while on leave of absence. At the same time, being on leave of absence is preventing folks from getting unemployment. Thousands are facing bankruptcy with savings in the bank because Kirby refuses to reclassify them as inactive.

The reclassification from active to inactive status would allow the employees to access their 401K savings, seek outside employment, and apply for assistance benefits. But Scott Kirby refuses because he has found a way to circumvent the unions and keep these 2000+ employees available as "seasonal labor" for next summer and beyond. Mr. Kirby's heartless conduct is unconscionable, particularly given that he was [compensated](#) \$16 million in compensation in 2019 and nearly \$9 million in 2020.

At the same time, we hope you will ask Ms. Sara Nelson about the advantages her organization gained from the CARES Act money, and how she proposes to fully represent the 1000+ United Airlines members who are starving in order to preserve their faith, medical autonomy, and rights without adequate union representation. Ask how United rewarded the Association of Flight Attendants for their willingness to turn their backs on their members.

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This entire story is disgusting as it appears that Mr. Kirby helped convince Congress to pay United's wages even as he planned to terminate employees after the expiration of the CARES Act job protection moratorium. Now, he wants you to think there is a worker shortage while nearly 2000 dedicated, skilled airline workers are grounded. These people want to work, but unlike Delta, which has a very reasonable testing protocol, United Airlines is all or nothing ... Get the job or lose your job.

We are fed up with Scott Kirby's awful treatment of his loyal employees who worked tirelessly and honorably during the worst days of this pandemic. We urge this Committee to hold Mr. Kirby accountable and demand answers. Mr. Kirby must explain why he is treating dedicated, experienced pilots and workers so poorly simply because they want to honor their God or protect their health.

These are our members, the [faceless employees](#) of United Airlines their boss, Scott Kirby, is destroying. Thank you for your attention and consideration of these issues.

Sincerely,



Captain Laura Cox
President



Captain Sherry Walker
Vice-President



Danielle Runyan, Esq.
Dir., Legislative Affairs

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