

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20510

April 9, 2020

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

We write today regarding the Department of Transportation's Order 2020-4-2, which was finalized on April 7, 2020, and establishes the parameters for implementation of authorities granted to you by Sections 4005 and 4114(b) of the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. We are concerned that the Department's method to identify covered points could leave certain airports that provide critical services without air carrier service and would like to receive additional information about this decision. In particular, we encourage the Department to reconsider the City of Newport News, and by extension the Newport News / Williamsburg International Airport (PHF), as an independent point of service for the purposes of Sections 4005 and 4114(b).

Under Order 2020-4-2, the Department identifies Norfolk, Virginia as an encompassing point of service for the broader Virginia Beach-Norfolk-Newport News, Virginia Metropolitan Area. While this may appear appropriate based on the broad city market identification data from the Bureau of Transportation Statistics and given the relative geographic proximity of Newport News to Norfolk, in actuality, the two airports serve distinct populations and provide unique and different services.

As you may know, Newport News and Norfolk are both surrounded and separated by water. The only physical connection is through two tunnels and a single bridge that span Norfolk Harbor at the southern end of the Chesapeake Bay. Residents of the area are confronted with traffic congestion at all hours of the day when trying to cross these bridges and tunnels. Recognizing this, the region has committed to spend billions of dollars in the coming years to expand their traffic capacity. However, in the meantime, passage from Newport News to Norfolk is neither quick nor easy.

With roughly 180,000 residents, Newport News is the fifth largest city in Virginia, and the airport serves more than half a million residents on the Virginia Peninsula. Notably, Newport News is home to Huntington Ingalls Industries, the only builder of Navy aircraft carriers in the country, and one of only two nuclear submarine builders in the United States. Newport News is also the home of the U.S. Department of Energy's Jefferson National Laboratory, which conducts important nuclear physics research. Further, the Virginia Peninsula is the site of several high-profile military facilities and commands located at Joint Base Langley-Eustis, in addition to NASA's Langley Research Center. PHF is the quickest and best option for service to all of these facilities. A potential hiatus in air carrier operations as a result of the Department's

proposed parameters for the implementation of the CARES Act threatens to negatively affect these critical national security operations.

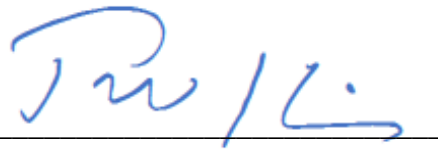
We understand the urgency of the current situation – the impact of this pandemic has been felt by all and aid must be delivered as quickly as possible. It is our understanding that PHF and the City of Newport News submitted correspondence to the Department on this issue prior to the final ruling. We urge you to reconsider the critical services provided at PHF and establish Newport News as a specified point of service by the Department.

We look forward to working with you as we all continue to respond to this crisis. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress



Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress



Elaine G. Luria
Member of Congress