

## United States Senate

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March 3, 2020

Mr. W. Douglas Parker  
Chairman and Chief Executive Officer  
American Airlines Group, Inc.  
4333 Amon Carter Boulevard  
Fort Worth, TX 76155

Dear Mr. Parker:

I write to urge that American Airlines consider implementing ticketing policy changes to suspend all flight change and cancellation fees for consumers seeking to make changes to their travel plans related to the coronavirus, or COVID-19. I hope you agree that such policy changes should reflect rapidly changing dynamics of this public health crisis and include all tickets purchased prior to implementation of the new policy. As the coronavirus continues to instill fear and uncertainty among your customers, I feel strongly that American Airlines has a moral obligation to make clear to consumers that they will not be charged additional fees for taking steps to keep themselves, their loved ones, and the public safe.

Last week, JetBlue Airways implemented a policy change to waive all flight cancellation and change fees associated with growing concerns among traveling Americans about the coronavirus.<sup>1</sup> Specifically, this new policy suspends all change and cancel fees for new reservations through March 11, 2020, for travel completed by June 1, 2020. Soon after, Alaska Airlines followed with a similar policy change of its own. These are welcome steps in the right direction to give consumers confidence that they will not be charged additional fees as fear mounts related to the spread of coronavirus in the United States, but they are limited in their approach. Airlines should enable consumers to adjust their travel plans – regardless of when those decisions are made or when a passenger's ticket was purchased.

I also understand that American Airlines implemented a similar policy change on Sunday, but its change comes with a restriction – requiring passengers to make changes 14 days prior to travel.<sup>2</sup> I strongly encourage American Airlines to rescind the 14-day restriction to ensure that travelers can make changes to their flights within two weeks of travel. Additionally,

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<sup>1</sup> Sinéad Baker, "JetBlue is waiving fees for canceling or changing flights because of the coronavirus, the first US airline to do so for all routes," *Business Insider* (New York, NY), February 27, 2020, <https://www.businessinsider.com/coronavirus-jetblue-cancel-refund-fees-waived-all-routes-2020-2>.

<sup>2</sup> Dawn Gilbertson, "Nervous about buying a plane ticket? American, Delta waiving change fees amid coronavirus crisis," *USA Today* (McLean, VA), March 1, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/travel/airline-news/2020/03/01/coronavirus-american-airlines-waiving-change-fee-new-tickets-jetblue-alaska/4924151002/>.

I ask that you extend your policy to include tickets purchased prior to March 2020 so that travelers who made travel arrangements before the implementation of your policy are not forced to choose between their health and safety and paying high fees.

As the virus spreads, federal and state agencies continue to develop response standards, travel restrictions and warnings, and preventive measures. In considering the dangers and risks of travel, Americans should not have to face the additional burden of flight cancellation or change fees.

American Airlines should use all resources at its disposal to protect consumers and its workforce from the spread of COVID-19. I strongly urge you to suspend all flight cancellation and change fees immediately – for tickets purchased prior to March 2020 and for a reasonable amount of time – to provide individuals and families with flexibility and peace of mind when it comes to their travel plans. I demand that you remove any current time restrictions for consumers hoping to change their flight arrangements within two weeks of a planned departure.

I appreciate your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senate