

November 7, 2024

The Honorable Patty Murray
Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Vice Chair
Senate Appropriations Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Vice Chair Collins:

As Congress moves to finalize annual appropriations bills for fiscal year 2025, the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE) and the thousands of airport professionals we represent from across the country urge your support for the following critical airport priorities:

FY 2025 DOT/FAA Funding Bill

- **Full Funding for AIP and Additional Funding for Supplemental Discretionary Airport Grants:** The Airport Improvement Program (AIP) provides federal grants to U.S. airports for projects to enhance airport safety, capacity, and security, and to address environmental concerns. According to the FAA, airports have \$62.4 billion in AIP- and BIL-eligible projects – some \$12.5 annually – through FY27. Those estimates do not include other non-eligible infrastructure projects and requirements, which increase total airport capital needs to more than \$23 billion annually. ***To help ensure that airports do not fall further behind in addressing critical infrastructure needs, we urge Congress to provide \$4 billion for the traditional AIP account as proposed by both the House and Senate; maintain additional funding for supplemental discretionary grants to airports of all sizes as proposed the Senate; and include sufficient funding to support the congressionally directed spending projects in the House and Senate bills.***
- **Help Airports Transition to Fluorine-Free Firefighting Foam:** The recently enacted FAA Reauthorization Act authorized \$350 million for a PFAS replacement program for commercial service airports. While the House bill does not include funding for this important transition to fluorine-free firefighting foam at airports, the Senate bill includes \$70 million. ***AAAE urges the Committee to provide \$70 million in FY25 to help airports transition to fluorine-free firefighting foam.***
- **Contract Tower Funding:** The FAA Contract Tower Program provides 265 smaller airports in 46 states with costeffective air traffic control services that enhance aviation safety and help connect smaller airports and rural communities with our national air transportation system. Both the House and Senate bills recognized the value of this program and increased funding in FY25, which would permit several new airports to be added to the program. ***AAAE urges Congress to provide \$256 million for the FAA Contract Tower Program in FY25.***
- **Small Community Air Service Programs:** We urge Congress to fully fund the Essential Air Service and Small Community Air Service Development programs. Both programs help to ensure that people who live in rural and less populated areas have access to our national aviation system.

FY 2025 DHS/TSA/CBP Funding Bill

- **TSA Exit Lane Staffing:** Despite clear direction from Congress and permanent provisions in federal law requiring TSA to staff exit lanes at airports where the agency performed those duties on December 1, 2013, the FY25 budget proposes once again to shift these responsibilities to airport operators. Congress has repeatedly rejected this proposal, and **AAAE urges Congress to include \$111 million to maintain existing TSA staffing at airport exit lanes in FY25, consistent with current law.**
- **Restore Funding for Law Enforcement Officer (LEO) Grants and Canine-Team Reimbursements:** Despite strong program support, Congress in FY24 eliminated funding for TSA's LEO reimbursement program and the officer's stipend for state and local-led canine teams, shifting these costs to airport operators. Consequently, airports have been forced to divert resources from other security purposes to pay for officer salaries. Additionally, some airports have had to reduce the number of canine teams operating in their facilities, reducing visible deterrence measures. The House-passed bill provides \$45.6 million for the law enforcement officer reimbursement grants and \$34.1 million for the state and local-led canine team reimbursements. **AAAE urges Congress to restore funding for these two critical reimbursements in FY25.**
- **TSA Staffing and Technology Investments:** Since late May, TSA has regularly broken records for the number of passengers screened at checkpoints with daily enplanements predicted by TSA to reach 3.1 million in 2025. We are pleased the House-passed bill provided supports additional resources requested by the agency to hire Transportation Security Officers to meet the growing travel volumes without increasing wait times; however, airports remained concerned that insufficient technology funding will delay the deployment of critical security screening technologies that are better able to detect the latest threats while also providing passengers with the convenience of keeping laptops, liquids, and aerosols in their carry-on bags. **AAAE urges Congress to fully fund new TSOs as requested and provide \$175 million as proposed by the House to expedite the acquisition and deployment of the latest security screening technologies to airport checkpoints.**
- **CBP Officers:** Airports and airlines have experienced double-digit growth in international travel and expect further growth through 2025. We remain concerned that CBP does not have enough officers to process international arrivals safely and efficiently without lengthy wait times. CBP's most recent workload staffing model identifies a shortfall of more than 5,000 officers to meet current and anticipated travel volumes at airports and other locations. Yet the FY25 budget only requests 150 new CBP officers, which is only 3 percent of the identified need. **We urge Congress to provide funding to sustain all current CBP officers and hire an additional 1,000 new officers in FY25 to address ongoing staffing shortages at airports.**
- **Aviation Worker Screening:** In September, Category X, I, and II airports had to significantly increase airport-performed screening of employees as part of TSA's issued aviation worker screening mandate. The second phase of this requirement is for airports to procure explosive detection systems to screen these employees no later than April 26, 2026. This will require airports to establish a costly new screening infrastructure that parallels and duplicates what TSA already has for travelers. **AAAE urges Congress to direct TSA to rescind the requirement for airports to procure and utilize explosive detection screening equipment to screen workers.**

Gaining funding for these important priorities is critical to enabling airports to meet growing infrastructure needs while meeting important security imperatives. Thank you for your consideration and support.

Sincerely,



Todd Hauptli
President and CEO