



STATE OF HAWAII | KA MOKU'ĀINA 'O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION | KA 'OIHANA ALAKAU
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HONOLULU, HAWAII 96813-5097

November 6, 2025

The Honorable Sean P. Duffy
Secretary of Transportation
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I am writing to urgently request a full waiver for all Hawaii airports—particularly Daniel K. Inouye International Airport (HNL)—from the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) planned 10 percent reduction in scheduled air traffic, set to take effect November 7, 2025, due to staffing shortages among unpaid air traffic controllers during the ongoing government shutdown.

Hawaii is uniquely vulnerable as the nation's most isolated population center, with no viable alternative to air travel for commerce, health care, or national security needs. Imposing these restrictions would inflict immediate and severe harm in 4 critical areas:

- **Access to Medical Services** Residents routinely travel to the mainland for specialized care unavailable in the islands—cancer treatment, organ transplants, neonatal intensive care, and emergency surgeries. Even modest delays or cancellations can become life-threatening when patients must fly 2,400 miles to reach a hospital. Within the state, neighbor-island residents depend on frequent inter-island flights to access Oahu's tertiary hospitals, trauma centers, and diagnostic facilities; any reduction in service strands patients on Maui, Hawaii Island, and Kauai.
- **Disruption of Cargo Movement and Food Security** Hawaii imports over 85 percent of its food and relies on daily inter-island cargo flights to distribute fresh produce, medicine, and livestock. Neighbor-island ranchers ship live cattle, pigs, and goats to Oahu for slaughter and processing; a 10 percent reduction in cargo capacity would strand animals, drive up prices, and threaten local protein supplies for residents and military commissaries alike.
- **National Defense and Military Family Wellness** Hawaii is home to Indo-Pacific Command, Pearl Harbor-Hickam, Schofield Barracks, and Marine Corps Base Hawaii—hosting more than 45,000 active-duty personnel and their families. Service members rely on commercial flights for rest-and-recuperation leave, family visits, PCS moves, and

emergency travel. Restrictions would degrade readiness, lower morale, and impair the Department of Defense's ability to rotate forces in the Pacific theater.

- **Economic Hardship** Tourism and related industries account for over 20 percent of Hawaii's economy and employ 1 in 4 residents. A 10 percent cut in flights would devastate small businesses, cancel bookings, and trigger layoffs across the state at a time when families are already struggling with high living costs.
- **State of Hawaii's Commitment to Fund Critical Workers** To eliminate any staffing shortfall that justifies these cuts, the State of Hawaii stands ready to immediately advance full salaries and benefits for all FAA air traffic controllers and the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) security screeners assigned to Hawaii facilities for the duration of the lapse in federal appropriations. We are prepared to execute emergency agreements within 24 hours to keep every position fully staffed, ensuring 0 safety or capacity compromises.
- **Gratitude to Dedicated Federal Workers** Hawaii deeply appreciates the unwavering commitment of FAA and TSA personnel who continue to show up for work without pay, safeguarding our airports, economy, residents, visitors, and military operations. Their sacrifice during these difficult times reflects extraordinary professionalism and dedication to public service.

Granting this targeted waiver—conditioned on Hawaii's direct funding of these essential personnel—would maintain full flight schedules, protect public safety, and prevent unnecessary damage to a state that contributes disproportionately to America's strategic interests.

We respectfully ask for your immediate approval of this waiver and welcome any required documentation or interagency coordination to implement it before tomorrow's scheduled reductions. My office is available at the contact information above to facilitate rapid execution.

Thank you for your leadership during this challenging time and for considering Hawaii's unique circumstances.

Sincerely,



EDWIN H. SNIFFEN
Director of Transportation