

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1013

Paul Leyh
Executive Director
Office of Security Operations
Aviation Security
601 South 12th St.
Arlington, VA 20598

March 20, 2020

Dear Director Leyh,

As the seriousness of the COVID-19 global pandemic increases, I write to request your collaboration in increasing critical safety protocols and ensuring the protection of Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) across the country. At the nexus of national security and the coronavirus public health crisis, Transportation Safety Officers play a critical role in preserving the safety of our nation. However, increased protective measures are essential to protect the health and safety of the 2.2 million crewmembers and civilian travelers on average who are screened by TSOs each day, though these numbers have decreased in recent weeks. It is of the utmost importance that TSOs receive the clear guidance, adequate equipment, and needed protective gear to ensure their personal health and safety, while also protecting the public against the spread of COVID-19.

First, as TSA officers work in direct contact with the public, screening passengers and handling baggage, it is critical that the unique risks these officers face are accurately assessed and met with appropriate safety protocols. Aligning the front-line risks of TSA officers with the protocols laid out by OSHA for high-risk workers is an essential first step. As such, ensuring that supplies of security and screening materials like Explosive Trace Detection (ETD) swabs are sufficient to meet single-use guidelines is necessary to help contain the spread of the virus. I was heartened to hear that Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport is due to receive a new supply on March 20th, and I stand ready to work with you in ensuring that production and distribution remain sufficient to meet increased demand. And, it is essential that TSO offers are issued N95 face masks without further delay. While not entirely eliminating the risk of illness, the close facial fit and improved filtration capability have been shown to be more effective in protecting against the airborne transmission of diseases. While some front-line TSA officers currently wear surgical masks as a protective measure, these masks are not designed to block very small particles and are not sufficient to protect against the spread of respiratory diseases like coronavirus.

In addition, I ask for your assistance in protecting TSA officers from future employment risk so that they may continue to protect the public during and beyond this global pandemic. I applaud the expanded use of weather and safety leave to protect employees who may have been exposed to coronavirus, and urge the continued use of this resource to ensure that officers are able to

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protect their health and the health of the public without delay. To provide further assurances for these officers in light of the current global uncertainty, I also urge you to delay the ratification deadline for the recently negotiated collective bargaining agreement to September 30th, 2020. I understand that discussions on this issue are ongoing, and I believe an extension by several months will allow acceptance of the agreement, even for any individuals experiencing job interruptions related to the pandemic.

The health, wellness, and security of TSA officers, flight crew, and the traveling public is of critical importance, and I urge you to take these necessary steps to protect officers' unique needs. Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport, the busiest airport in the world, relies on the tireless work of TSOs, thousands of whom reside in my Congressional District. As their representative, I look forward to your partnership on these efforts and stand ready to advocate for the necessary funding and resources to ensure that officers are fully equipped and protected. I thank you for your leadership during these challenging days and look forward to expeditious and continued response efforts.

Sincerely,



David Scott
Member of Congress