

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2021

VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Scott Kirby
Chief Executive Officer
United Airlines
233 S. Wacker Drive
Chicago, IL 60606

Dear Mr. Kirby:

We are writing to ask that United Airlines refrain from outsourcing over 2,500 inflight catering jobs. When Congress passed the Payroll Support Program, it included requirements that airlines choosing to receive funding from the program commit to refrain from layoffs or furloughs of employees. United Airlines has received \$7.7 billion from the U.S. Treasury under the first two rounds of the Payroll Support Program, and reports indicate the company is planning to seek funding from the extension of the Payroll Support Program passed by Congress in the American Recovery Plan Act.

Congress provided support to help the airline industry survive the pandemic. Airline workers deserve a similar level of job security as the economy recovers and travel resumes. Instead, United has announced it plans to outsource inflight catering work, thus far failing to give workers a commitment to maintain their jobs, pay, and benefits. Many of the United Airlines catering workers, who are overwhelmingly people of color, have served the airline for decades. We are also concerned that United's plans to outsource the catering jobs will jeopardize workers' continued union representation. We are aware that United Airlines opposed the workers' effort to join UNITE HERE in 2018, and that in spite of this opposition 72 percent of the catering workers voted in their election in favor of joining the union. Instead of working towards outsourcing jobs, United should use the time afforded by the Payroll Support Program to engage in good faith negotiations with these employees and their union, who have been working without a contract for over two years and whose work has helped United survive during this challenging period.

We also note that while other United Airlines workers could lose their jobs after the expiration of the Payroll Support Program, United has announced millions of dollars in stock grants and cash retention bonuses for top executives.¹ United has stated that it expects its profit margin to surpass 2019 levels by 2023.² Federal support for the aviation industry was intended to protect U.S. airline jobs during the worst of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are asking you to provide United's current workers with the job security they deserve during this pandemic.

¹ See, e.g., *United offers top execs millions in bonuses*, Crain's Chicago Business (March 2, 2021) (online: <https://www.chicagobusiness.com/transportation/united-offers-top-execs-millions-bonuses>).

² See, e.g., *United Announces 2020 Financial Results: 2021 Will Focus On Transition To Recovery; Expects To Exceed 2019 Adjusted EBITDA Margin By 2023**, United (Jan. 20, 2021) (online: <https://hub.united.com/2021-01-20-united-announces-2020-financial-results-2021-will-focus-on-transition-to-recovery-expects-to-exceed-2019-adjusted-ebitda-margin-by-2023-2650045521.html>).

Please respond by May 12, 2021, to inform our offices whether you will commit to refrain from outsourcing the catering jobs. If you will not make this commitment, please provide the following information:

1. An explanation of why you will not commit to refrain from outsourcing over 2,500 United Airlines catering workers' jobs in Cleveland, Denver, Honolulu, Houston, and Newark; and
2. An explanation for why you have not made assurances that current United Airlines workers will keep their jobs, pay, benefits, and union representation, should United decide to outsource inflight catering operations; and
3. The city and years of service to United of the employees who could lose their job if United outsources inflight catering operations.

We are communicating with Treasury Secretary Yellen to request that any new Payroll Support Program agreement include commitments from airlines to refrain from outsourcing jobs, and to rescind or refrain from making any commitments to provide executive bonuses while airlines are receiving payments under the PSP.

Sincerely,



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



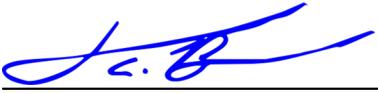
Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Robert Menendez
United States Senator



Cory A. Booker
United States Senator