

United States Senate

August 31, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Duffy:

I write to request that the Department of Transportation correct a flaw in its 2024 consumer refund regulations that is placing an unsustainable financial burden on travel agencies and travel advisors, the overwhelming majority of which are small businesses.

Under the Department's April 2024 final rule¹, the "merchant of record" in an airline ticket transaction must refund the consumer within seven days of a cancelled or significantly changed flight. When a travel agency or advisor books a ticket on behalf of a client, the agency is often the merchant of record, even though the cost of the ticket is immediately transferred to the airline at the time of purchase. The Department's August 2024 final rule² requires airlines to "promptly" return those funds to the ticket agent, but it does not define "promptly" or set any deadline. In practice, airlines frequently fail to return funds within the seven-day window, forcing agencies to refund customers out of their own pockets while they wait on the airline refund.

Travel agencies and advisors operate on slim margins, and many simply cannot afford to front refunds to their customers, particularly for group bookings worth tens of thousands of dollars, before the airline has returned the money. These small businesses are being held financially accountable for a timeline they do not control, while the airlines that actually hold the funds face no enforceable deadline. Many of these small businesses may go out of business if nothing is done. Small businesses are the backbone of the American economy and travel advisors and agencies play a critical role in our tourism industry.

I respectfully request that the Department fix this imbalance through rulemaking or other appropriate administrative action, whether by establishing a firm deadline for airlines to return funds to ticket agents, aligning the agency's refund obligation with its receipt of funds from the airline, or another workable solution. Consumers deserve

¹ <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-04-26/pdf/2024-07177.pdf>

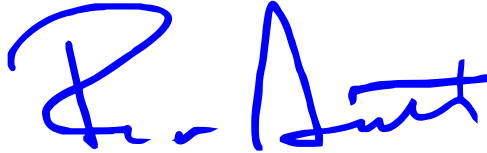
² <https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2024-08-12/pdf/2024-17602.pdf>

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timely refunds, but that obligation should rest with the party holding the money, not with small businesses left waiting on the airlines.

Thank you for your attention to this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Rick Scott", with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick Scott
United States Senator