

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-4705

April 4, 2016

The Honorable Peter Neffenger
Administrator
Transportation Security Administration
601 S. 12th Street
Arlington, VA 22202

Dear Administrator Neffenger:

We are writing to you today to express our concern about current passenger wait times at security screening checkpoints at our nation's busiest airports, including Seattle-Tacoma International Airport.

As you are aware, SeaTac is the nation's fastest growing large airport, and is experiencing record passenger traffic. Even though the airport is still months away from the busy summer travel season, passengers are currently experiencing lines that are over an hour long during peak periods. Just last week, more than 100 passengers in a single day missed their scheduled flights due to long wait times. We are concerned about this problem becoming even worse as we get into the summer months, and we would like to work with you to address this problem as quickly as possible.

In light of the lengthy wait times that we have seen at SeaTac, we urge you to allow local training of Transportation Security Officers through October of this year. The decision to require all new TSOs to attend the TSA Academy at the Federal Law Enforcement Training Center (FLETC) headquarters in Georgia seems to be creating problems in addressing urgent staffing shortages. While we support the decision to require all TSOs to participate in this new training protocol, we believe TSA should reintroduce localized training on an as-needed basis, as it did at 10 other large airports in preparation for a busy spring break travel season.

Currently, SeaTac's newly hired TSOs have been unable to obtain their required training at FLETC. In one instance SeaTac had 30 new officers bumped from their training slot at FLETC to accommodate the training needs of another large airport. By temporarily reinstating local training, TSA can move toward clearing the backlog of TSOs who are in need of training, and slot in TSO officers for FLETC as space becomes available.

Additionally, retention remains a significant challenge across the system, and SeaTac is losing TSOs at a rate of as many as 30 per month. Given this large turnover we are concerned that SeaTac will be unable to maintain staffing levels even with additional slots at FLETC.

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The busy summer travel season is closing in, and with it comes the likelihood of even longer wait times. With that in mind, we request that you brief our offices on the feasibility of the proposals identified in this letter and any other solutions you may have to offer in addressing this problem.

SeaTac is a vital hub for the Pacific Northwest, and we look forward to the opportunity to work with you to ensure that it continues to be able to meet the growing demands of our region.

Sincerely,



Maria Cantwell
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator