

# All Wheels Up Applauds the Landmark Protections for Disabled Americans Announced by U.S. Department of Transportation

*With the support of stakeholders and decades of advocacy, travelers with disabilities now have increased supports and fewer limitations*

FRISCO, TEXAS, TX, UNITED STATES, December 18, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- All Wheels Up ([AWU](#)), [the first non-profit organization in the world to fund research](#) for a wheelchair spot on commercial aircraft, announced today its' appreciation and support of the Department of Transportation's final rule entitled, "Ensuring Safe Accommodations for Air Travelers with Disabilities Using Wheelchairs." This rule changes Air Carrier Access Act regulations to improve the air travel experience for people who use wheelchairs and other assistive devices.

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This historic set of protections, announced on December 16 by Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg are the culmination of many years of cooperation, informing and grassroots advocacy.

“It takes a coalition of amazing stakeholders for something this monumental to happen,” said Michele Erwin, Founder and CEO of AWU. “I cannot thank all of those involved in getting us to this point enough. This news puts us on the precipice of huge changes to those who use wheelchairs can travel.”

With bipartisan support, these new protections require airlines to achieve more rigorous standards for accommodating passengers with disabilities, especially for passengers who use wheelchairs. The rule sets new standards for assistance, mandates hands-on training for airline employees and contractors who physically assist passengers with disabilities and handle passengers' wheelchairs. It also specifies actions that airlines must take to protect passengers when a wheelchair is damaged or delayed during transport.

An estimated 5.5 million Americans use a wheelchair, and many encounter barriers when it comes to air travel. Department of Transportation data shows that for every 100 wheelchairs or scooters transported on domestic flights at least one is damaged, delayed, or lost. Prior to this new set of standards, those with damaged or lost equipment had to pay for repairs or replacements out of their own pockets. That is no longer the reality.

“We appreciate the bipartisan leadership in Washington that has driven this movement,” said Stephen Cullen, AWU Board Chair. “Our hope is the progress continues, aiming for more accessible air travel and achieving wheelchair space on commercial flights. This vision will become a reality.”

For many travelers with disabilities, traveling by plane has become so difficult, and in some cases dangerous, many have stopped taking to the air. From damage to equipment to a lack of attention from airline staff, the negatives have outweighed the positives. These new protections are a gamechanger, said Erwin, whose son utilizes a wheelchair.

“This is very personal to me,” said Erwin. “The work done by many, many people with the same goal have led us to this point. This is not something that will help a few people, this is something that will positively help millions of Americans.”

This newly announced policy gives all advocates of travel rights hope for future protections. The people of AWU know the work is not done.

“As an organization we are excited to see these sweeping and significant rights granted to all disabled Americans,” said Alan Chaulet, AWU Vice President. “We look forward to seeing it help passengers with disabilities, and we thank the Department of Transportation and our many partners for making this happen.”

Attention Reporters and Editors: All stakeholders in this release are all available for interviews. Please contact AWU Publicist Robb Leer at 612.701.0608 or [robbl@leercommunication.com](mailto:robbl@leercommunication.com)



AWU logo

#### About All Wheels Up:

Established in 2011, All Wheels Up (AWU) is the first non-profit organization in the world to fund research and development for a “wheelchair spot” on commercial aircraft. The not-for-profit organization works with airline carriers, aircraft manufacturers, and lawmakers to make airplanes wheelchair accessible for the millions of people who depend on them for mobility and safe seating. AWU’s mission is to forge a future with safer and more dignified accessible air travel through research, advocacy, and community outreach.

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