

# All Wheels Up Receives Muscular Dystrophy Association Grant for Projects that Make the Skies More Accessible

*Funds will go towards further testing to safely put wheelchairs on planes and a research paper on the necessity of greater access for disabled passengers*

FRISCO, TEXAS , TX, UNITED STATES, February 4, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [All Wheels Up \(AWU\)](#), the first nonprofit organization in the world to fund research for a wheelchair spot on commercial aircraft announced today that the organization is a recipient of a Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) Advocacy Collaboration Grant for wheelchair restraint testing that will be used to help create wheelchair spaces on all commercial aircraft. In addition, this grant will support the research, writing, and publishing of an article on the medical necessity of wheelchair spots on commercial airplanes.



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*Stephen Cullen AWU Board  
Chair*

Because of this grant, more focus will be put on the need for dedicated space for wheelchairs on planes. The grant is part of MDA's program to promote and support key public policy and advocacy initiatives in coordination with partner organizations to empower people living with neuromuscular diseases to live longer, more independent lives. In the spirit of MDA's commitment to collaboration, AWU is proud to be part of this program to facilitate impactful and cooperative advocacy projects and initiatives.

“MDA has been an incredible partner since day one of our organization. We are grateful for both their financial support and for their belief in our goal to put a wheelchair spot on planes,” said Michele Erwin, Founder and CEO of All Wheels Up. "Our success has happened in part to the generosity of MDA. The funding provided to us allows us to perform research that one day soon

will make true accessibility happen."

Grants like the generous one from MDA help give organizations like AWU the opportunity to make a greater difference for the people it serves. The tests funded in part by this grant will be performed against FAA test criteria to gather data that will support FAA certification guidance and the development of industry testing standards. Additionally, the planned research paper on the medical necessity of a wheelchair spot on commercial airplanes will support primary research from the crash tests.

"We are very grateful to MDA for their generosity and dedication to securing a wheelchair spot on commercial airplanes. These grants will support further research on the medical necessity of wheelchair spots on commercial airplanes and additional crash tests on restraint systems at the National Institute of Aviation Research facility," said Stephen Cullen, AWU Board Chair. "Both initiatives are crucial to our advocacy efforts in Washington. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of these grants in initiating and completing these studies. We view MDA as an unwavering partner in this mission."

"At Muscular Dystrophy Association, we're proud to support innovative collaborations that drive meaningful change for the neuromuscular community," said Paul Melmeyer, Executive Vice President, Public Policy and Advocacy, Muscular Dystrophy Association. "These grants represent a critical investment in uniting advocacy efforts to ensure that every voice is heard and that individuals and families affected by neuromuscular diseases have access to the care and support they need."

#### About MDA Collaboration Grants

MDA launched the Advocacy Collaboration Grants Program in 2022, demonstrating its commitment to fostering partnerships that advance the health, well-being, and quality of life for people living with neuromuscular diseases. In 2022, MDA awarded \$100,000 in grants to five organizations dedicated to driving impactful change for the neuromuscular disease community. This innovative program was created to accelerate the development and delivery of meaningful treatments, expand access to quality healthcare, and support initiatives that enhance life opportunities for people living with muscular dystrophy, ALS, and any of over 300 related neuromuscular diseases. In 2023, the program provided over \$140,000 in grants to seven organizations, reinforcing MDA's dedication to empowering community-driven solutions. These grants supported projects that aligned with MDA's mission to create a world where people living with neuromuscular diseases live longer, more independent lives. This year's grant applications opened in August 2024 with a focus on non-partisan advocacy initiatives that are likely to advocate positive changes within the neuromuscular community that lead to federal, state, and local initiatives and laws.

#### 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.

#### About Muscular Dystrophy Association

Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA) is the #1 voluntary health organization in the United States for people living with muscular dystrophy, ALS, and over 300 other neuromuscular conditions. For 75 years, MDA has led the way in accelerating research, advancing care, and advocating support and inclusion of families living with neuromuscular disease. MDA's mission is to empower the people we serve to live longer, more independent lives. To learn more visit [mda.org](https://mda.org) and follow MDA on Instagram, Facebook, X, Threads, TikTok, LinkedIn, and YouTube.

#### About Muscular Dystrophy Association's 75th Anniversary

In 2025, the Muscular Dystrophy Association proudly marks 75 years legacy, impact and momentum in the fight against neuromuscular diseases. Since our founding, MDA has been at the forefront of research breakthroughs, providing access to comprehensive care, and championing the rights of people living with muscular dystrophy, ALS, and over 300 other neuromuscular diseases. This milestone has been made possible by generations of dedicated support from people living with neuromuscular disease, their families, researchers, clinicians, volunteers, and donors—who boldly drive our mission forward. As we look ahead, we remain committed to honoring this legacy, building on the impact we've made together, and continuing our momentum toward transformative progress for people living with neuromuscular disorders. Learn more at [MDA75.org](https://mda75.org).

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