

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 22, 2024

Ed Bastian  
Chief Executive Officer, Delta Air Lines  
1030 Delta Boulevard  
Atlanta, GA 30354-1989

It has come to our attention that on October 16, 2024, your airline temporarily removed a passenger from a flight after one of your employees determined the passenger was wearing a “threatening” shirt. As the purported details of this incident have been outlined in international news reports, we are disturbed and perplexed by the disgraceful manner in which the passenger was treated.

Delta’s Contract of Carriage for U.S. passengers provides that transport may be refused to passengers. Examples include when the passenger’s conduct is disorderly, abusive or violent, or appears to be intoxicated; when the passenger is barefoot; if the passenger interferes with the flight crew’s activities; or “when the passenger’s conduct, attire, hygiene or odor creates an unreasonable risk of offense or annoyance to other passengers.”

In this circumstance, the passenger was reportedly wearing a t-shirt with the words, “Do Not Give In To The War Within. End Veteran Suicide,” emblazoned on the front. It defies both sound logic and good faith intentions that these 11 words would “create an unreasonable risk of offense or annoyance” to other passengers. Nevertheless, when the passenger was removed to the jet bridge to discuss the concern, news reporting states the flight attendant directed the passenger to replace her shirt with a different item. Faced with an ultimatum to submit or miss her flight, she was forced to change right there on the spot while facing a wall to retain her modesty. Having complied with the orders of your employee, the passenger found additional insult added to injury when she was directed to a new seat further back in the plane from the one for which she had paid extra.

Given that over 30,000 active-duty U.S. service members and veterans who have served in the military since 9/11 have died by suicide, we applaud the willingness of anyone working to bring attention to this issue – especially veterans such as your passenger in this case. Raising awareness and ending the stigma are integral to improving mental health outcomes and ending our country’s epidemic of suicides. Your employee’s actions ran counter to those goals. We believe that your employee erred in the application of Delta Airline’s policy, and took action in a manner that would have been distressing to any member of the traveling public. Assuming you agree with these statements, we are eager to see your airline publicly take steps to substantiate your support for America’s veterans and combating suicide.

We urge you to take the appropriate action to not only ensure the passenger is appropriately compensated for the distressing experience, but that you also reconsider the training of your employees to ensure that no individual passenger is treated in such a shameful manner.

Sincerely,



---

Katie Boyd Britt  
United States Senator



---

Lindsey O. Graham  
United States Senator