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August 4, 2015

The Honorable Mark Kirk  
The Honorable Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Kirk and Shaheen:

I am writing on behalf of the American Academy of Allergy, Asthma and Immunology to express support for your legislative proposal to ensure that airlines are prepared to provide emergency treatment to passengers suffering from severe allergic reactions. The AAAAI is the largest professional medical specialty organization in the United States representing allergists, asthma specialists, clinical immunologists, allied health professionals and others dedicated to improving the treatment of allergic diseases through research and education.

Approximately 15 million Americans have food allergies, which can cause anaphylaxis, a systemic allergic reaction that can kill within minutes. The National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases recommends that anaphylaxis be treated promptly with epinephrine. Accordingly, it is critically important that epinephrine auto-injectors (EAIs) are readily available wherever food allergens may be present. States across the country are enacting laws to ensure the availability of EAIs in schools as well as private entities such as restaurants, sports facilities, and amusement parks. This is based on the need for immediate treatment and the potential for death to occur before transfer can be made to a hospital emergency department. Clearly, this is of even greater concern on an airline flight thousands of feet above ground.

Pursuant to Federal legislation, in 2001, the FAA ordered airlines to install automated external defibrillators (AEDs) for cardiac resuscitation on all flights and train flight attendants in their use. The AAAAI believes it is no less important for the FAA to implement the same policy with regard to epinephrine auto-injectors for the treatment of anaphylaxis.

The AAAAI was very pleased to support legislation you co-sponsored encouraging the availability of epinephrine auto-injectors in schools. We look forward to working with you on this effort to ensure that airlines are prepared to treat and prevent fatality from anaphylaxis during flights.

Sincerely,

Robert F. Lemanske, Jr., M.D.  
President