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THE SENATE
STATE OF NEW YORK



MARISOL ALCÁNTARA
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Thursday, March 15, 2018

Oscar Munoz
Chief Executive Office
United Airlines
233 S. Wacker Drive
Chicago, Illinois 60606
oscar.munoz@united.com
Delivered via Facsimile

Dear Mr. Munoz,

I am outraged and appalled to read of the recent death of a 10-month old French bulldog being transported in the cabin of one of your flights. Kokito's death is the latest example of a disturbing pattern of animal neglect at United Airlines. According to the Department of Transportation, 18 pet passengers died on your airline in 2017 and 13 more were injured, a rate of 2.4 incidents per 10,000 animals transported. This is far more than any other airline and almost triple the industry average of .79 incidents per 10,000 animals transported.

This latest death was entirely preventable, and occurred after a flight attendant ordered a passenger to put her puppy in the overhead compartment for the duration of a flight from Houston to New York. Overhead compartments are neither designed nor approved for the safe transport of any living creatures, and this command from airline personnel to a passenger with no legal right to refuse was inhumane and unconscionable.

To prevent future deaths like Kokito's, I plan to introduce legislation to ensure that pet passengers enjoy safety standards while traveling by air. My Pet Passenger Bill of Rights will ensure that no animals are ever again treated like Kokito was. Specifically, we will require that animals must never be stowed in the overhead compartment. Next, any storage cabin that contains or could contain an animal in transit must be climate controlled and have proper air ventilation. We will also require that all airline employees are properly trained to know and understand the proper questions to ask passengers about their pets and how to ensure safety while animals are traveling.

In addition, I am calling on the District Attorney to launch a criminal investigation into Kokito's death. Your airline's contention that the flight attendant did not know there was a dog in the carrier is outrageous. The passenger and her young daughter repeatedly told the attendant about the dog. However, your attendant took no action to address their concerns or check the bag for the animal. Obviously, passengers do not bring dog carriers on a plane as a carry-on item without bringing their pets. This ridiculous assertion should not, and will not hold up in criminal court. I will do everything in my power to assist the DA in using every legal remedy available to bring justice to this family.

I fervently urge you and your airline to immediately correct your current policies and employee training requirements related to the safe care of animals on flights. This is not the first instance of animal neglect or abuse on your airline, but it should be the last.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Marisol Alcántara". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Marisol" being more prominent than the last name "Alcántara".

State Senator Marisol Alcántara
New York Senate District 31