



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
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Ben Minicucci
Chief Executive Officer
Alaska Airlines
19300 International Boulevard
Seattle, WA 98188

Re: *Alaska Airlines Policies and Practices*

Dear Mr. Minicucci:

I am writing to inquire about Alaska Airlines' policies and practices regarding cooperation with law enforcement, particularly as they relate to efforts to interdict the illegal flow of controlled substances into Alaska.

Alaska is facing an unprecedented public safety and public health crisis driven by the illegal distribution of controlled substances. Unlike many other states, Alaska's geographic isolation and transportation realities mean that virtually all illicit drugs consumed in Alaska are imported from outside the state.¹ That creates a substantial price markup for illicit drugs, making our communities uniquely attractive targets for drug trafficking organizations. The Alaska Department of Public Safety's 2024 Annual Drug Report confirms this pattern and documents a surge in drug seizures statewide.

The human toll is staggering. Overdose deaths rose from 121 in 2015 to 339 in 2024, an increase of approximately 180 percent over that period.² Many of these deaths involved fentanyl and methamphetamine, often in combination, and disproportionately impacted Alaska Native communities.

In discussions with our law enforcement partners, I have been advised that Alaska Airlines has adopted internal policies and practices that actively discourage employees from cooperating with law enforcement outside of formal legal process. Most notably, recently reported signage displayed to employees instructs, "If a law enforcement officer

¹ Department of Public Safety, 2024 Annual Drug Report: chrome-
<https://dps.alaska.gov/getmedia/b8e3a715-fbf7-4b2a-9629-7252246bf184/2024-Annual-Drug-Report.pdf>

² Alaska Department of Health, 2024 Drug Overdose Mortality Update:
<https://health.alaska.gov/media/wqql4fhp/2024-drug-overdose-mortality-update.pdf>

or government official asks you for guest information, stop, don't comply." I am further advised that employees who do provide tips or information to law enforcement that prove useful in disrupting drug trafficking do so at personal and professional risk, including the possibility of discipline or termination if their cooperation is discovered.

This dynamic is already affecting prosecutions. In some instances, prosecutors have declined to pursue otherwise viable cases due to concern that calling an Alaska Airlines employee as a witness would expose them to employment retaliation. That outcome serves neither public safety nor justice.

I understand—and share—the importance of safeguarding privacy, due process, and individual rights. At the same time, Alaska's transportation systems—commercial aviation foremost among them—play an unavoidable role in the movement of people and goods into our state. When employees observe conduct that is plainly suspicious or dangerous, policies that deter good-faith cooperation with law enforcement may unintentionally shield criminal activity and exacerbate the harm being done to Alaska communities.

The company's own Code of Conduct sends mixed signals on employee interaction with law enforcement. In certain contexts—such as bullying or suspected human rights violations—employees are encouraged to involve local law enforcement. The Code also affirms that employees have the right to contact government agencies when they have "reasonable concerns regarding the legal or safety implications" of actions taken by other employees, and that doing so will not subject them to retaliation. Yet elsewhere, the Code seems to forbid employees from cooperating with government officials or law enforcement officers making information requests—whether by "subpoena, letter, phone call, personal visit, or other request"—unless they have permission from the Legal division, and the Code warns that failure to follow its policy "could result in discipline [or] termination of employment."³ That kind of internal contradiction risks deterring the very sort of good-faith cooperation that supports public safety and accountability.

We understand that Alaska Airlines' posture may reflect caution following litigation—particularly *Eid v. Alaska Airlines*, where passengers alleged unlawful discrimination after being removed from a flight. But if that case has led to a de facto policy of discouraging cooperation with law enforcement, I would suggest that is an overcorrection. Good-faith engagement with law enforcement can be reconciled with civil rights and privacy obligations. In fact, our best public safety outcomes demand it.

³ Alaska Air Group, Code of Conduct and Ethics, <https://news.alaskaair.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/12/Alaska-Air-Group-Code-of-Conduct-December-2024.pdf>

Accordingly, I invite you and your team to meet with my team and me to discuss Alaska Airlines' policy decisions in this area. My goal is to better understand the rationale behind these policies, explore whether there is room for clarification or refinement, and determine how Alaska Airlines and the State of Alaska can work together, consistent with the law, to reduce the flow of illicit controlled substances into our state.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. I look forward to the opportunity for a constructive discussion.

Sincerely,



Stephen J. Cox
Attorney General