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July 19, 2017

Richard Anderson
co-Chief Executive Officer
National Railroad Passenger Corporation
60 Massachusetts Ave, NE
Washington, D.C. 20002

Dear Mr. Anderson:

I write concerning your new management role at Amtrak – a railroad that is critical to the Northeast's economy and the lives of my constituents. Amtrak desperately needs strong leadership to ensure it is rebuilt after years of neglect and underinvestment. Your experience in the airline industry shows an ability to help turn around struggling companies and improve their performance – something Amtrak surely needs. As a strong advocate for revitalizing our rail network and enhancing safety, I welcome a strong, collaborative partnership with you focused on improving Amtrak and protecting the lives of the passengers who depend on the railroad and the workers who keep it running every day. I am concerned, however, that many anti-consumer practices that are commonplace in the airline industry may now find a home at Amtrak. Passengers have rightly revolted as their rights are increasingly sacrificed to shareholders and earnings reports. I seek your commitment that you will advance real solutions that lead to a stronger passenger rail network instead of the anti-passenger practices that now plague airline travel.

In recent years, airlines have started shrinking seats, imposing massive and unfair fees, and trimming service to small communities – to name just a few new airline practices. These efforts are now commonplace throughout the industry, with nearly all but the most elite-level fliers finding themselves paying more for less. Recent news from Amtrak raises concerns that these practices may take root at the railroad. On July 12, Amtrak's current CEO, Wick Moorman, reportedly said that Amtrak was considering tightening seats like airlines and "other things that just don't make it quite as comfortable." That was also your first official day as co-CEO, a position you will hold until you take over the president and CEO position in January 2018. Notwithstanding the timing, his statement is alarming and should worry all who rely on Amtrak, our country's only coast-to-coast passenger railroad.

Undermining the traveling experience is not the answer to what's ailing Amtrak. Looking for ways to squeeze passengers shouldn't happen at airlines, and it shouldn't happen at Amtrak.

These practices could turn people off from Amtrak, encouraging them to drive and further clog our roads with congestion. Instead, it is imperative you adopt responsible, innovative practices that actually enhance ridership and persuade Americans as to the value and convenience of passenger rail. I urge you to commit to smart solutions that will improve rail service, like working with Congress to bolster federal investments in safety measures and completing critical infrastructure upgrades.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation, which oversees both Amtrak and the airline industry, I look forward to your response and to working together to improve our passenger rail network.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate