Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 10, 2018

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representative
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Shuster
Chairman
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter A. DeFazio
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure
United States House of Representative
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United State Senate
Washington, D.C 20515

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
United States Senate
Washington, D.C 20515

Dear Speaker Ryan, Minority Leader Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader Schumer, Chairman and Ranking Members:

As Congress begins possible consideration of an infrastructure package, a Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill, and the appropriations for U.S. Department of Transportation this year, we write to make clear our strong opposition to any attempts at changing the current High Density ("Slot") and Perimeter rules at Ronald Reagan Washington National Airport (Reagan National).

Reagan National and Washington Dulles International Airports were designed by the federal government and operate on its behalf as an integrated system. Acknowledging the physical limitations and community impacts of aircraft noise at Reagan National, Congress mandated the Slot and Perimeter rules. Dulles International was planned as both the growth airport and international gateway for the region's aviation needs. For over three decades,

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passenger volume at Dulles International grew while the Slot rule at Reagan National kept flight activity relatively stable.

Maintaining operational stability has also achieved balance with Thurgood Marshall Baltimore Washington International Airport (BWI) so that the broader interests of the region are better served. Our airports enable Maryland, the District of Columbia and Virginia to access the global economy in ways that create jobs and opportunities for the region. Part of the rationale for the relocation of major corporate headquarters such as SAIC, Hilton Hotels, Nestle USA and Volkswagen of America is the connectivity our regional aviation system provides.

However, changes by Congress to the Slot rule in 2000, 2003, and 2012 have disrupted the system's balance. After six consecutive years of growth, passenger enplanements at Reagan National overtook Dulles International in 2015, 2016 and 2017. Flight activity resulting from legislative loosening of the Slot and Perimeter rules have led to significant congestion and stress on Reagan National's facilities and a decline in commercial domestic passenger volume at Dulles International. Since 2000, domestic commercial passenger traffic at Reagan National has grown 50 percent while Dulles International has declined by 9 percent. The decline at Dulles International is, in part, attributable to changes made by Congress to the operational rules at Reagan National.

The impacts of additional modifications to existing law could financially destabilize Dulles International at a time when the airport is still recovering from previous Slot and Perimeter alterations and external economic factors. Investments made by the Airports Authority from 1990 to 2010 resulted in over $4 billion in debt. Further complicating the repayment of this debt is the decrease in the number of airlines and passengers, the culmination of which makes Dulles International more expensive and thus less competitive. History has shown that increasing slots, changing aircraft utilization or expanding the perimeter results in local and regional economic volatility as well as increased aircraft.

No Member of Congress appreciates another representative meddling with the assets in their state or district. We, too, strongly oppose any attempts by other Members to dictate operations at these airports for their own personal convenience at great cost to our communities and constituents. We have seen in past debates that proposals to significantly change the Slot and Perimeter rules have threatened to derail the entire FAA reauthorization process. We would all be better served by avoiding repetition of this debate so that all Members may focus on true issues of national importance.

For these reasons, we request to keep intact the current rules governing operations at Reagan National in any germane legislation. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator

Shelley Moore Capito
U.S. Senator

Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator

Joe Manchin III
U.S. Senator

Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator

Barbara Comstock
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

John K. Delaney
Member of Congress

Robert J. Wittman
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

Bob Goodlatte
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer, Jr.
Member of Congress

David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress

Alex X. Mooney
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Evan Jenkins
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown
Member of Congress

Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator