



U.S. Department of Homeland Security
Transportation Security Administration
6595 Springfield Center Drive
Springfield, Virginia 20598

February 17, 2021

The Honorable Daniel T. Kildee
U.S. House of Representatives
Attention: Ms. Hannah Jenuwine
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative Kildee:

Thank you for your correspondence dated December 14, 2020, sharing information about communication impediment designations on state identification cards. As you mentioned, some states are beginning to adopt these designations as a way for individuals with disabilities to alert law enforcement of potential barriers to communication.

We are committed to helping individuals with disabilities navigate the travel screening process and to ensuring that all passengers, regardless of their personal situations and needs, are treated with dignity, respect, and courtesy. I agree that the communication impediment designation could be a useful tool for TSA as we continuously work to improve the travel screening process for individuals with disabilities. As requested, I am providing our responses to the questions you posed in your letter.

1. What steps does TSA take to identify and review all state laws allowing for communication impediment designations on state identification cards and drivers licenses? How often does TSA review these state laws?

As states have only recently begun adding communication impediment designations on state identification cards and driver's licenses, TSA is reviewing the information to explore possible process and technology solutions for these designations.

2. What steps does TSA take to ensure that TSA agents can recognize all state communication impediment designations via manual travel document checking and/or Credential Authentication Technology (CAT) processes? Also, what are the current capabilities of CAT in recognizing communication impediment designations? And if there are no such capabilities, what steps are being taken to make this happen?

We are updating applicable Transportation Security Officer (TSO) training to ensure TSOs are aware of communication impediment designations. CAT technology is not presently capable of reading these designations on state identification cards or driver's licenses, however, with further engineering, CAT could be set up to display this information as long as it is a data point in the barcode on the identification. We are discussing the possibility of this addition to the CAT process.

3. How does TSA incorporate information on such designations into current Passenger Support Specialist (PSS) and Travel Document Checker (TDC) training? How often is such training/guidance updated?

While these designations are not currently included in TSO training, screening of and effective interactions with individuals with disabilities are covered in the Basic Training Program (Phases 1 and 2), which is required of all new-hire TSOs. We are updating applicable trainings to ensure that all TSOs are aware of communication impediment designations, and expect to deliver the updated training to the TSOs as early as May 2021.

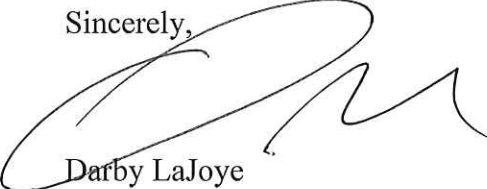
4. How is feedback from stakeholders in the disability rights community incorporated into these trainings?

TSA engages with the disability rights community through the Disability and Medical Conditions Coalition that includes national, regional, and community-based organizations and advocacy groups. These coalition organizations and groups serve individuals with physical and mental disabilities, including cognitive, intellectual, and developmental disabilities as well as chronic medical conditions. TSA's Civil Right & Liberties, Ombudsman and Traveler Engagement routinely solicits input from coalition members to identify and address security screening challenges for individuals with disabilities. We also invite coalition members to host TSA trainings. These coalition-member led trainings provide opportunities for TSOs to learn from the experts how to successfully engage with, and screen, travelers with disabilities.

TSA uses feedback from our coalition members to develop guidance and best practice publications for distribution to TSA officers. We deliver monthly virtual training to TSOs specifically on effective engagement and screening of travelers with disabilities and medical conditions. In addition, we offer Passenger Support Specialist (PSS) training to all TSA officers. The centerpiece of this training, which discusses etiquette, sensitivity practices, and effective communication with travelers with disabilities, is provided by a coalition member.

We will forward an invite for you to attend our next coalition teleconference, which is scheduled for February 24, 2021 from 2 to 4 p.m. Eastern Time, to share information with members on how to prepare to fly in the wake of the mask-wearing requirements issued by the Centers for Disease Control. I appreciate your continued advocacy for individuals with disabilities and your support of our mission to secure our Nation's transportation systems. If we may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me personally or our Legislative Affairs office at (571) 227-2717.

Sincerely,



Darby LaJoye
Senior Official Performing the Duties
of the Administrator

cc: The Honorable Bennie G. Thompson
Chairman, Committee on Homeland Security
The Honorable John Katko
Ranking Member, Committee on Homeland Security