Dear Representative,

As a constituent, a flight attendant and member of the Association of Flight Attendants – CWA, I am writing to strongly urge you to cosponsor HR 2744. This is bipartisan legislation introduced by Representative Tim Bishop that would clarify the intent of the original Family and Medical Leave Act (FMLA) in regards to hours of qualification for flight attendants and pilots. This legislation will finally correct years of unfairness in qualifying for FMLA coverage and I urge you to show support for the nation's flight attendants and pilots by cosponsoring this legislation.

The intent of the original law was to provide for 12 weeks of unpaid leave if an employee has worked 60% of a full time schedule over the past year. Based on the typical 40 hour, 9 – 5 work week, this 60% comes to 1,248 hours, which was rounded up to 1,250 hours. So, in order to qualify for FMLA coverage, an employee has to have logged in 1,250 hours over 12 months to be eligible.

While 1,250 hours adequately reflects 60% of a full time schedule for the vast majority of employees in this country, that equation does not work for flight attendants and pilots. Flight attendants and pilots work under the Railway Labor Act rather than the Fair Labor Standards Act which covers most 9-5 workers. Time between flights, whether during the day or on overnights/layovers, is based on company scheduling requirements and needs but does not count towards crewmember time at work. Flight attendants and pilots can spend up to 4 – 5 days a week away from home and family due to the nature of their job, however all those hours will not count towards qualification.

Also, many airline crewmembers are on "reserve" status, which means that they have to stand-by to be called for duty if others fail to show for an assigned flight. They must be prepared to report for duty at any time. The company recognizes that they are "on duty" and guarantees a set number of hours for which they will be paid each month, whether the reserve actually flies and works an operating trip or not. However, for FMLA qualifications, only their actual time working flights counts towards their FMLA qualification, making it much harder for them to reach the 1,250 hour threshold.

HR 2744 clarifies the original intent of FMLA by stating that if a flight attendant has worked or been paid for 60% of a full time schedule, they then will qualify for FMLA coverage. This legislation simply clarifies the intent of the law to the uniqueness of the airline industry. Something that Congress intended from the beginning.

I urge you to stand for fairness in the application of the law by supporting and cosponsoring HR 2744!

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