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AFGE Petition for Title 5 Rights

Honorable Senator(s) _____

On behalf of the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE), the AFL-CIO, and our collective unions the under-signed request that you support the rights of Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) at the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). AFGE represents more than 700,000 federal and District of Columbia employees in 70 agencies, including the 45,000 Transportation Security Officers who protect the flying public. We ask you to cosponsor S. 1856, the “Rights for the TSA Workforce Act of 2021” introduced by Senator Brian Schatz of HI.

When the Transportation Security Administration was established, its administrator was given uniquely broad authority over the workforce to set pay and working conditions. As a result, TSOs do not benefit from the Fair Labor Standards Act or the General Schedule pay scale and do not have representational rights accorded by Congress to most of the federal workforce under the Civil Service Reform Act of 1978. TSOs cannot appeal adverse personnel decisions to a neutral third party, rights that are held by most law enforcement officers who serve elsewhere within the Department of Homeland Security. Even as TSOs have conducted their essential national security duties without fail throughout the Coronavirus Pandemic, they are doing so at the risk of their health and lives and those of their families. Yet they are among the lowest paid federal workers and have the fewest rights at work. To date, more than 9,000 individuals at TSA, mostly in the screening workforce have contracted the virus and tragically, 20 have lost their lives.

S. 1856 honors TSOs’ dedication to America’s aviation security by:

- Repealing the TSA Administrator’s authority to maintain a separate and unequal personnel system that applies only to the TSO workforce.
- Ending the current TSA personnel directives that have allowed TSA to be the judge and jury, with no neutral third-party review, in workforce disciplinary matters.
- Requiring TSA to follow the labor-management employee relations statutes that provide workplace rights and protections to most federal government employees under Title 5 of the U.S. Code.

In the last Congress, the U.S. House of Representatives passed similar legislation on March 5, 2020, by a bipartisan vote of 230-171, and we expect the House to pass a similar bi-partisan bill this year in H.R. 903. Currently S. 1856 has 33 co-sponsors in the U.S. Senate.

We would greatly appreciate your support as a co-sponsor. This bill will give our dedicated workforce at the Transportation Security Administration Title 5 rights most federal employees benefit from. Transportation Security Officers have done their jobs protecting our country in the 20 years since 9/11 and during the current pandemic and it is time for them to be treated with the same respect and dignity given to their colleagues in the federal government and the Department of Homeland Security.

Date: _____



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