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386342

March 7, 2019

Honorable Brian Kemp
Governor of Georgia
206 Washington St.
Suite 203 State Capitol
Atlanta, GA 30334

Dear Governor Kemp:

On behalf of over 450 Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) working at Atlanta Hartsfield International Airport (Atlanta Hartsfield) represented by the American Federation of Government Employees, AFL-CIO (AFGE) who are also members of Atlanta North Georgia labor community, I write to express our union's opposition to SB 131, the State Airport Takeover bill. SB 131 is unnecessary and potentially damaging to the Atlanta community.

Atlanta Hartsfield is the busiest airport in the world and annually generates \$34.8 billion in revenue. More than 63,000 workers are employed at the airport. AFGE and the labor community have long complained about "sweetheart" deals and corruption in contracting at the local, state, and national level. Transferring control over Atlanta Hartsfield to a Governor-appointed board does not ensure that contracting issues will be resolved. Instead, Georgia legislators should strengthen laws to increase contractor oversight and accountability. Atlanta Hartsfield is an economic engine for the local community, yet the Governor-appointed board that would control the airport does not include officials elected by Atlanta residents to represent them. The SB 131 eliminates the ability of the local community to bring forward issues of concern to local officials. Most importantly, the Atlanta community never requested the Governor's assistance in running Atlanta Hartsfield. AFGE supports efforts by Atlanta Mayor Keisha Bottoms to implement an Independent Review Office, known as I-PRO, which was created through an ordinance signed by Mayor Bottoms in September 2018.

AFGE is very concerned that the labor community was denied a substantive role in discussions regarding SB 131. The TSO workforce represented by AFGE proved their commitment to keeping aviation safe for the Atlanta area and the nation by staying on the job without a paycheck for 35 days due to an unnecessary partial federal government shutdown. The duties performed by other workers at Atlanta Hartsfield are essential to ensure the airport is clean, passengers receive assistance, transportation is available, and that goods and service are provided to the public. Many of these workers are represented by unions who negotiate higher pay, better benefits and protect their rights on the job. SB 131 bill opens the door to increased privatization of essential government functions and denies employees and their union representatives a rightful seat at the table.

AFGE opposes the race to the bottom of contractor oversight and accountability and worker rights that will result from passing legislation to replace local control of Atlanta Hartsfield Airport with a Governor-appointed board. We urge you to oppose SB 131.

Sincerely,

J. David Cox
National President

