



*Association of Professional Flight Attendants*

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*Proudly Representing the **Flight Attendants** of American Airlines*

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Office of the National President

March 28, 2023

Attorney General Merrick Garland  
U.S. Department of Justice  
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Attorney General Garland:

The Association of Professional Flight Attendants (APFA) represents 25,000 Flight Attendants at American Airlines. As National President, my highest priority is to protect the safety of our members so that they are prepared to perform their essential safety duties. Over the last few years, there has been a shocking increase in the number of assaults on Flight Attendants while on duty. Each week, there is yet another incident that occurs on an airplane. It's becoming an epidemic of violent behavior. Aggressive enforcement of the federal laws already on the books is essential to ending violence.

President Biden and Department of Transportation Secretary Buttigieg have both been unequivocal in their commitments to protect flight crews and have asked the Department of Justice to prosecute those arrested for interfering with and or assaulting Flight Attendants to the fullest extent possible. We believe it must be a top priority of the Department of Justice to carry out this mandate.

This is why we are shocked by a recent prosecution of a passenger who assaulted an American Airlines Flight Attendant enroute from Miami to London on January 9th, 2023. The Flight Attendant was insulted, spat on, and punched by a passenger simply for asking him to return to his seat after trying to sneak into a Business Class seat that he had not purchased. Our Flight Attendant was badly shaken, and his attack resulted in a black eye and a nose laceration. The flight deck turned the plane back to Miami, and nearly 200 passengers were inconvenienced because of the violent behavior of a single passenger.

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The assailant was arrested and charged in Miami, but the trial outcome was disappointing. In the end, the individual received a slap on the wrist—minimal community service only partially served, probation, and a modest fine. And because there is no federally coordinated "no-fly" list, the passenger was not restricted from booking another commercial flight in the United States.

When found guilty, we expect that prosecutors understand that deterring this behavior requires vigorous application of the available punishment. Respectfully, I request that you reach out to the 93 U.S. Attorneys across the nation and ask them to take the attacks on Flight Attendants seriously.

First and foremost, we are safety professionals and aviation's first responders. Our members need backing from federal law to ensure we are always prepared to respond to emergencies. If Flight Attendants are not safe, no one is safe. I appreciate your help in ensuring that violence on airplanes ends.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julie Hedrick". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julie Hedrick  
National President  
Association of Professional Flight Attendants