

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

January 27, 2020

## VIA ELECTRONIC DELIVERY

Mr. Richard Anderson  
President and Chief Executive Officer  
National Railroad Passenger Corporation dba Amtrak  
1 Massachusetts Avenue NW  
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Anderson:

We are deeply disappointed by Amtrak's initial quote of \$25,000 that was offered to a group of disability advocates – five of whom use wheelchairs – when seeking to purchase tickets and arrange for reasonable accommodations to travel aboard Amtrak's Lincoln Service from the City of Chicago to Bloomington-Normal, Illinois.

The champion of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA), former Senator Tom Harkin, put it best: "This landmark law is about securing for people with disabilities the most fundamental of rights: 'the right to live in the world.' It ensures they can go places and do things that other Americans take for granted." Amtrak clearly failed to make this right a reality for our constituents and we share their frustration with receiving an unreasonable and offensive quote of \$25,000 to do something that most Americans take for granted: travel to a work event *together*.

It is particularly frustrating that this incident comes nearly five years after the U.S. Department of Justice Civil Rights Division conducted an investigation and found that Amtrak's failure to make all of its existing intercity rail stations readily accessible to, and usable by, individuals with disabilities, including individuals who use wheelchairs, violated Title II of the ADA. Congress has long understood that achieving accessibility is challenging. That is why the ADA provided Amtrak 20 years to come into compliance.

The time has come for Amtrak to hold itself accountable for making intercity passenger rail readily accessible to all Americans. Accordingly, we request that Amtrak conduct a comprehensive review of its national disability and accessibility policies. As Amtrak conducts this review, we strongly encourage you to institute new policies that go above and beyond the bare minimum Federal requirements to establish Amtrak as the premier transportation option for *all* travelers, particularly passengers with disabilities.

We also request that you send a strong message about the importance of improving passenger accessibility by creating a new position on Amtrak's Executive Leadership Team that directly reports to you and focuses on making system-wide enhancements. In addition, we ask that you work with us to develop Federal legislation establishing a new seat on the Amtrak Board of Directors to be filled by a member of the disability community.

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Amtrak's decision to shift accommodation costs onto disabled commuters undermined trust with loyal customers and damaged the Corporation's brand. We support your decision to reconsider and end the existing policies and practices that led to the unlawful initial charge to these commuters.

We know that you share our view that every American should be able to travel with dignity on our Nation's taxpayer-subsidized passenger rail system. We hope that this incident will serve as a turning point in the long-standing effort to make sure Amtrak customers with disabilities can travel as seamlessly as any other passenger on the national network.

We look forward to your timely response, and working together to ensure that every Amtrak rider is afforded dignity and respect as well as an affordable and safe way to travel as protected by law.

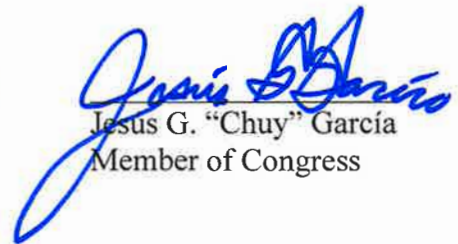
Sincerely,



Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Jesus G. "Chuy" Garcia  
Member of Congress