

Testimony on House Bill 639 – Favorable
HB639 Transportation - Aviation - Passenger Health and Safety (Aviation Health and Safety Act)

Environment and Transportation Committee

February 17, 2026

Dear Honorable Chair Korman, Vice Chair Guyton, Members of the Committee:

I urge you to support HB639, Transportation - Aviation - Passenger Health and Safety (Aviation Health and Safety Act). I believe the act is an important step toward ensuring safety for people who fly in restraints.

One reason I support this bill is that I know several people who experienced medical emergencies during long flights or shortly afterwards (most likely as a result of the long flight), and I also witnessed medical emergencies of fellow passengers. Some of these incidents resulted in emergency landing, hospitalization, and even death. The risk of such emergencies is even larger for people flying in restraints—for example, their limited mobility increases the chances of blood clots and their anxiety increases the risk of heart attacks. Information on a person's medical history can be critical for effective help—for example, helpers need to know of any allergies or medical conditions such as diabetes. Commercial airline passengers have the ability to provide such information in various ways before departure through the airline, phone apps, or by flying with fellow travelers who know their medical conditions—and this bill would ensure that people flying in restraints can also provide the information needed to effectively help in case of a medical emergency.

Another reason why I urge you to support the bill is the desire to ensure passenger safety during refueling. Refueling is an operation of inherently elevated risk, which requires special precautions even for commercial airlines, such as keeping all doors open and posting flight attendants at each door. This is, of course, because in case of an incident it is critical to evacuate the plane quickly—a task that is much harder if passengers are in restraints. Without effective use of their hands due to the restraints, people could stumble and fall while rushing toward the exit—and if someone fell, others could not easily help them back up, thus blocking the path toward safety. As a result, I believe the best way to ensure safety is to keep restrained passengers off a plane while it refuels—a process that would be required by the proposed bill.

For these reasons, I urge you to give HB639 full consideration and a favorable report.

Sincerely,

Tamas Varnai, Silver Spring, MD, 20910