



December 8, 2016

Jimmy Kimmel Live
6834 Hollywood Blvd.
Hollywood, CA 90028

Dear Mr. Kimmel,

We write on behalf of the Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) Rights Task Force and Transportation Task Force. We are deeply troubled by a segment on the Jimmy Kimmel Live show on October 14, 2016, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5VqHupuaw3A>) regarding people with disabilities who use so called “comfort animals.” CCD is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for Federal public policy that ensures self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society.

The segment on your show regarding the use of service animals and emotional support animals in air travel included inaccuracies and was generally disrespectful of the tens of millions of people with disabilities living in the United States.

First, the Transportation Security Administration, which is part of the Department of Homeland Security, has no authority over the use of service animals and emotional support animals in air travel. Access is governed by the Air Carrier Access Act (ACAA), which is enforced by the Department of Transportation. The ACAA is a civil rights statute that prohibits discrimination against people with disabilities in air travel.

Second, under the ACAA, airlines are required to provide access for service animals and emotional support animals unless there are any factors that would preclude the animal traveling in the cabin. These factors include “whether the animal is too large or heavy to be accommodated in the cabin, whether the animal would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of others, whether it would cause a significant disruption in cabin service, and whether it would be prohibited from entering a foreign country that is the flight’s destination.”¹ Also, airlines are never required to accommodate “unusual service animals” such as “snakes, other reptiles, ferrets, rodents, and spiders.”²

¹ 14 C.F.R. Section 382.117(f).

² *Id.*

Lastly, like service animals, emotional support animals are required to behave appropriately to accompany a passenger with a disability on an airplane. The only difference between service and emotional support animals is that service animals are specifically trained to do a task that mitigates the effects of a disability while emotional support animals mitigate a disability by their very presence.

Misinformation, such as that delivered on your segment, only makes it more difficult for people with disabilities, including veterans, who use service animals and emotional support animals to use the assistance that helps them live full lives. Service animals and emotional support animals are as important to the people with use them as are wheelchairs to people who are unable to walk. Furthermore, people with allergies and service animal and emotional support animal users can typically be successfully accommodated on the same flight.

Although the ACAA has been in place for 30 years, people with disabilities continue to encounter numerous barriers in air travel. Broken wheelchairs, inaccessible lavatories and inflight entertainment systems, and delayed assistance are just some of the problems that people with disabilities face every day in air travel. In 2014, passengers filed 27,556 disability-related complaints as reported by 173 domestic and foreign air carriers, which represents a nine percent increase over 2013.

Without the ability to travel, people with disabilities who use service animals and emotional support animals may be unable to work, receive needed health care and treatment, or travel for pleasure like other Americans. We request an opportunity to meet with you to educate you about the community of people with disabilities and represent people with disabilities on your show in a way that is respectful and truthful. Please contact Heather Ansley at Paralyzed Veterans of America, heathera@pva.org, (202) 416-7794, with any questions.

Sincerely,

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