



February 5, 2025

## **Consortium of Constituents with Disabilities' Task Force Co-Chairs Denounce Baseless Blaming of Deadly Crash on Disabled Federal Workers**

Last Wednesday night, a horrific accident claimed the lives of 64 people on American Airlines Flight 5342 from Wichita, Kansas to DCA and three soldiers on a Blackhawk Army Helicopter. The undersigned co-chairs of the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities Task Forces on Developmental Disabilities, Autism, and Family Support; Education; Emergency Management, Employment and Training; Health; Housing; Long Term Services and Supports; Rights; Technology and Telecommunication; Transportation; and Veterans mourn the lives lost in this tragedy and offer our deep condolences to the friends, family, and colleagues of those killed in the crash.

Thursday afternoon, during his press briefing on the crash, President Trump made the baseless claim that initiatives by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to hire individuals with disabilities and members of other underrepresented groups may have been the cause of the crash. This sentiment was echoed by Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy, Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth, Vice President J.D. Vance, and Press Secretary Karoline Leavitt. These remarks included assertions that we must only hire people of “superior psychological quality” in juxtaposition with these hiring initiatives. We find these remarks to be deeply insulting as they cast doubt on the capacity and capability of people with disabilities to participate in the workforce with dignity.

At this time, no investigation has released findings. [Reporting](#) indicates that the air traffic control towers were understaffed at the time of the crash and has raised no evidence linking the event to the qualifications of the workers. This is amidst [ongoing concerns](#) that the airspace above DCA is increasingly overcrowded.

These statements come only one week after President Trump issued an [executive order](#) consisting of the same false claims made at the briefing. It is shameful to use this tragedy to push anti-diversity policies, which he has made a priority during his first two weeks in office. Diversity initiatives exist to provide opportunities for those who have historically been excluded. Section 501 of the Rehabilitation Act remains the law of the land. Agencies remain obligated to make efforts to recruit qualified people with

disabilities for their workforce. Regardless of any statement made by the administration, the law says people with disabilities belong in the federal workforce.

The FAA has [strict standards](#) to qualify to be an air traffic controller and to serve in other FAA positions. Candidates must still be competitive and qualified for the roles they are seeking. The insinuation that employees with disabilities and from other marginalized communities who were hired for roles they are qualified for are somehow lesser than other employees is repugnant and discriminatory.

The [executive order](#) entitled, “Keeping Americans Safe in Aviation” is only one of many focused on targeting diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives in an effort to limit equal opportunity regardless of race, gender, or disability status. The undersigned task force co-chairs of the Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities stand united in opposition to these attacks on our civil rights.

Sincerely,

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The Consortium for Constituents with Disabilities (CCD) is the largest coalition of national organizations working together to advocate for Federal public policy that ensures the self-determination, independence, empowerment, integration and inclusion of children and adults with disabilities in all aspects of society free from racism, ableism, sexism, and xenophobia, as well as LGBTQI+ based discrimination and religious intolerance.