

**Remarks of Julie Frederick
Association of Professional Flight Attendants
Before the
Advisory Committee for Aviation Consumer Protection Meeting
On Inflight Mobile Cell Phone Usage
October 29, 2014**

Good morning Members of the Advisory Committee. I am pleased to appear before you today representing the Association of Professional Flight Attendants regarding in-flight mobile cell phone usage. The APFA, representing the world's largest air carrier and the largest main line flight attendant union in the world, with almost 25,000 flight attendants, strongly opposes voice calls on aircraft.

Under the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) proposal, it would be up to the airlines to decide whether or not to allow in-flight calls. The FCC has said they are not the "Federal Courtesy Commission," and indeed, they are not. It continues to be an extremely controversial subject for anyone who flies today. Not even the FCC Commissioners were unanimous regarding the role of the FCC in addressing the public interest on this subject.

As flight attendants, we have no interest in becoming the cell phone police on our airplanes. We welcomed the decision to allow passengers the use of small, lightweight, hand held electronic devices-such as, tablets, e-readers, and smartphones – at all altitudes – for just this reason.

We all know that the work of a flight attendant, can at times, be daunting. As aircraft first responders the safety of our passengers is our top priority and our mission statement includes: "We will, to the highest standards of which we are capable, maintain a safe and secure environment... while providing warm, service and support to our customers and colleagues."

The APFA strongly opposes voice calls on aircraft for several important reasons; the in-flight customer experience, passenger comfort, and most importantly, concerns for safety and security.

Aircraft cabins can be noisy, even under the best of circumstances, and people typically speak much louder while using their mobile phones. The irritation and the distraction of a cell phone conversations will make an already challenging environment that much more difficult to guarantee our passengers' safety. Safety lectures will be ignored because they will not be heard, and we believe there will be a spike in confrontation between passengers that will, in the end, create moments of chaos in the cabin.

According to American Airlines, there were over 1,200 incidents of passenger misconduct in 2013 alone, a 10 percent increase from 2012. This figure will only increase – and increase dramatically -- if cell phone usage is allowed. Today's flying environment presents the cabin crew with challenges each and every day over carry on baggage stowage both under the seat and in the overhead bins. Recently, "personal space" with seat recline issues have led to incidents of air rage. Add the disruption of people talking on their cell phones, and there is little doubt that this will lead to more confrontations. A flight attendant should not have to act as a referee between passengers, most who wish only for peace and quiet. This will undercut our critical safety role will make travel unpleasant, and will not add to the customer's experience.

Airline baggage and reservation change fees add up to more than \$6 billion per year. Should airlines be given the authority to allow passenger use of cell phones on aircraft, some, but not all will simply use this as another way to collect yet another fee from passengers. We know that the cafeteria style of airline ticketing that some airlines exercise with checked baggage,

food for sale, and boarding priority are met with disdain and not always clear-cut in the fee and ticketing charges. The Department has stepped in to provide more transparency to these ancillary fees. This is just another reason we believe that the DOT should “just say no” to cell phones.

Furthermore, the security aspect of allowing passengers voice communications should not be overlooked. In 2005, when the FCC last took under consideration lifting the ban on mobile devices, the issue was raised regarding the potential threat to the U.S. commercial aviation system. At that time, the Justice Department, the Department of Homeland Security, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation all raised concerns stating in part, “the uniqueness of service to and from an aircraft in flight presents the possibility that terrorists and other criminals could use air-to-ground communications systems to coordinate an attack.” Flight attendants share this concern because we are now the last line of defense against the cockpit in maintaining the integrity of the aircraft in flight.

On December 12, 2013, Wall Street Journal quoted Secretary Foxx as stating that ...“his department has heard that airlines, fliers, flight attendants and lawmakers are all troubled over the idea of passengers talking on cellphones in flight – and I am concerned about this possibility as well.” We agree with Secretary Foxx. As customer service professionals we have not seen passenger support for the ability to use cell phones in flight. In fact, we have seen just the opposite. Passengers do not want this added disruption to their flight. During the course of the past several months of public comment, we believe that the numbers overwhelmingly show that the public supports the idea of a formal ban.

Just in case the DOT does not ban the use of cell phones on aircraft, we at APFA support legislation introduced in both the Senate and House of Representatives to prevent the use of

cell phone voice calls on aircraft. To quote House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Chairman Bill Shuster, “Let’s face it, airplane cabins are by nature noisy, crowded, and confined. . . . For the most part, passengers are looking for ways to make their flights go by as quickly and quietly as possible. Pilots and flight attendants are focused on ensuring a safe and comfortable flight for everyone onboard.”

The ability to make a call on one’s cell phone is not worth compromising the safety of a flight because passengers could not hear flight attendant announcements or because they become unruly. In the event of an emergency evacuation, following evacuation instructions can sometimes be the difference between life and death – those precious few moments when a cabin may be filling with smoke or worse.

At the end of the day we’ve all had similar experiences – an obtrusive caller at the grocery check out line, a restaurant or even on the airplane prior to departure. To have passengers speaking on their cell phones while in the air, will only ensure an unpleasant and unsafe environment.

Our goal is the same, to get our passengers to their destination. . . . safely and comfortably. And they have told us, loud and clear, that “silence is golden”.

That completes my testimony. I will be happy to respond to any questions you may have.