

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 10, 2017

Contact: Charles Leocha, (202) 713-9596; charles.leocha@travelersunited.org

We at Travelers United join all decent human beings in sharing reactions of horror and disgust at the treatment of a passenger on yesterday's United Airlines flight 3411 (operated by Republic Airways) from Chicago O'Hare to Louisville, KY who was bloodied, knocked unconscious and forcibly removed from the flight. The stated reason was that the flight was overbooked, United had four crew members not on their assigned schedules (for reasons unknown) who needed to get to Louisville, and no passengers volunteered to take \$800 United travel vouchers in exchange for volunteering to leave the flight, so the airline selected four passengers who were ordered to leave.

One of those selected passengers, a medical doctor who told the crew that he had patients to see in Louisville the next morning, was dragged off the plane by airport police, limp and with a bloody nose, in a video taken by another passenger that has gone viral on social media. It was reported that the man tried to reboard the plane later, but was again forcibly removed. After the four crewmembers boarded and a school group and their chaperones also left the flight in disgust, the flight departed two hours behind schedule at 7:42 PM CDT.

Travelers United Chairman Charles Leocha made the following statement:

"None of the passengers on this flight had done anything wrong. They had paid their fares and had followed all of the airline's rules. Passengers should never be made to be inconvenienced in order to accommodate an airline that has made an operational miscue. United had numerous other options for getting the four crewmembers to Louisville, including using other airlines (which airline crews do frequently, and American also flies nonstop between O'Hare and Louisville), putting them on a later flight (there was a 9:00 PM flight yesterday that departed on-time; flight 3411 was scheduled for 5:40 PM but was delayed two hours), and transporting them by ground transportation (Louisville is just over five hours by highway from Chicago).

"If United's need to get those four crewmembers on that flight was so great, the airline should have been willing to offer at least the federally-required minimum of \$1,350 cash (not airline scrip) to any passenger willing to be rebooked on a different flight. Instead, it only offered \$800 vouchers, plus one night at a hotel, which was evidently insufficient to convince any passenger to take the deal.

“Finally, the whole situation may have been avoided if the United personnel involved had used a more compassionate and understanding tone from the beginning. According to passenger reports published in the *Washington Post* today, an airline supervisor walked onto the plane and brusquely announced: “We have United employees that need to fly to Louisville tonight. ... This flight’s not leaving until four people get off.” This attitude rubbed several the wrong way. A more humane attitude may have been enough to persuade more passengers to voluntarily rebook.

“However, not even the most customer-focused comportment by on-the-ground personnel can make up for airline greed and mismanagement. We urge the US Department of Transportation to conduct a full investigation of this incident and ensure that the doctor and his family are made whole for the pain and trauma inflicted upon them. We also urge the maximum possible compensation for other passengers on the flight who were affected. United and other airlines should always put the interests of their paying customers first.”

Travelers United is the only national consumer advocacy nonprofit representing the interests of the users of all common carrier transportation and travel-related services. Founded in 2009 as the Consumer Travel Alliance, Travelers United’s mission is to identify and promote ways to improve and enhance travel for consumers across all modes of travel — airlines, rental cars, cruise lines, rail and bus transportation and accommodation.