

Hawaiian, Alaska airlines combo is good for Hawaii

By Mayors Richard Bissen, Rick Blangiardi, Derek Kawakami and Mitch Roth

Hawaii is a place rooted in meaningful connection — from our relationship with the land and its resources, to the vast network of friends and ohana we share throughout our islands and beyond.

That’s why a robust airline industry, committed to connecting our people and places, is not only good for Hawaii’s prosperity, but essential.

As Hawaii’s mayors, we have been closely following the proposed combination of Hawaiian Airlines and Alaska Airlines, much like many of you. After speaking with our communities and leaders of both airlines, each of us has come to the conclusion that a combined company will strengthen service for Hawaii’s communities — improving our connectivity and providing more options to our people near and far.

For many of our constituents, especially on our neighbor islands, air travel is the fastest and most reliable way to get to doctor’s appointments, commute to jobs, visit ohana, and get our hands on some of our islands’ most ono delicacies.

Further, our economies depend on planes to bring in construction crews, medical specialists and essential goods.

This is something that we share in common with our friends to the north. Much like Hawaii’s island communities, only 3 of the 19 communities Alaska Airlines serves in the state of Alaska are accessible by road.

Residents of those communities, just like us, know how important it is to have airlines that are healthy and committed to providing reliable service.

Throughout Alaska Airlines’ more than 93 years of service to the 49th State, there have been countless examples of its commitment to maintaining service to those who rely on its — reinforcing its promise to never forget where it comes from. That’s the kind of airline we want to see joining forces with Hawaiian Airlines to provide essential transportation to our communities.

Over the past few weeks, we each had the opportunity to meet with the leaders of Alaska and Hawaiian as they held community conversations throughout the state. It was important for us to engage with them face-to-face on Alaska’s commitments to our communities and what the proposed combination would mean for the people of Hawaii.

In these meetings, we asked many of the

ISLAND VOICES



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questions we've been hearing from our constituents.

We were heartened to hear Alaska Airlines' commitment to preserve and grow union jobs in Hawaii, sustain a strong local base of operations and regional headquarters, maintain neighbor island service, and most importantly, keep the Hawaiian Airlines that we love, Hawaiian Airlines. Leaders also reiterated that Hawaiian Airlines' customers would keep their miles and loyalty program status, which is one of the most frequent questions we've received.

What also was important to us was Alaska Airlines' commitment to open, honest dialogue and to sharing developments with the public, including the creation of

a 16-member advisory board made up of respected local community leaders throughout the state. We came away from these important conversations confident the company is committed to doing the right thing for our communities.

Already, Alaska has had a long track record of being a good community partner in Hawaii. Since 2007, it has donated more than \$5 million to more than 200 local organizations, including statewide nonprofits like ClimbHI and Make-A-Wish Hawaii.

More recently, in the days following the tragic wildfires on Maui, it transported hundreds of thousands of pounds of needed supplies and donated cash and millions of airline miles to support impacted Maui residents and relief organizations.

We believe giving Hawai-

ian Airlines the opportunity to combine with Alaska Airlines is the best way to ensure our state's largest airline remains healthy and able to serve local residents for generations to come.

While regulators still need to thoroughly evaluate the proposed combination, we humbly ask that they consider a few questions that are important to us and our constituents. Will the combination strengthen service for Hawaii residents? Does the acquiring airline have a history of showing up for communities reliant on air service? Has the acquiring airline demonstrated that it is a good community partner?

From our perspective, it is clear this combination is the answer — with a Hawaiian Airlines strengthened by Alaska Airlines in service to Hawaii's communities for the long-term.



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Hawaiian Airlines announced in December an agreement to combine with Alaska Airlines. A Hawaiian aircraft passes an Alaska plane at the gates at Maui's Kahului Airport.