



Transportation
Security
Administration

JAN 14 2011

Ms. Diane Zipursky Quale
President
Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network
4813 St. Elmo Avenue
Bethesda, MD 20814

Dear Ms. Zipursky Quale:

Thank you for your letter of December 7, 2010, regarding Mr. Thomas Sawyer's screening experience and your recommendation that we make enhancements to our screening procedures to improve the travel experience of similarly situated passengers.

Thank you also for your positive comments regarding my decision to personally contact Mr. Sawyer to discuss his screening experience. Mr. Sawyer's unfortunate experience called our attention to the importance of frequent training, retraining, and reinforcing of TSA's policies related to the screening of people with ostomies and the need to treat them with sensitivity and respect.

TSA takes concerns shared by advocacy groups, such as yours and the other signatories, very seriously. TSA's goal is to provide the highest level of security and customer service to all who pass through our screening checkpoints. Our policies and procedures focus on ensuring that all passengers, regardless of their personal situations and needs, are treated with dignity and courtesy.

TSA is working diligently to train our Transportation Security Officers (TSOs) on how to carefully and gently screen persons with disabilities and medical conditions. TSOs are instructed to use extreme care and sensitivity when conducting a patdown of travelers using ostomy-related devices. As you know, patdowns are conducted by same gender officers, and all passengers have the right to request private screening at any time in the screening process. Passengers should not be asked to lift clothing to exhibit a pouch, nor do they have to empty or remove their devices during the security screening process.

We share your desire to minimize the discomfort, inconvenience, and embarrassment some of your constituents may experience while undergoing security screening. We are sensitive to the concerns of all passengers and maintain an ongoing dialogue with a coalition of 70 groups representing a variety of segments of the disability population. A number of cancer-related groups have been a part of the coalition, including the United Ostomy Association of America (one of your co-signers) and Cancer Treatment Centers of America. Based on input we received from these two groups over the last year, we have augmented the training provided to our TSOs to make them better attuned to the needs of those who have recently undergone cancer treatment, as well as those pertaining to cancer survivors. The Bladder Cancer Advocacy Network and the other organizations that signed your letter are also welcome to join this coalition.

In addition, to further improve the training provided to our TSOs, later this month Mr. Sawyer is meeting us here at TSA Headquarters to provide his perspective on how we can improve our training. I would like to personally invite you and any of the other signatories to your letter who may wish to join us for this meeting to provide your input. My staff will be contacting you in the near future once the date for the meeting is finalized.

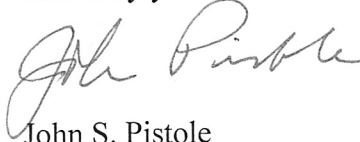
As you recognize in your letter, to ensure the greatest level of privacy possible, TSA recently made a Disability Notification Card template available for organizations and their constituents to use to provide information about their medical condition or disability to TSOs at airports. A link to this card can now be found on TSA's web site (below) and a copy of the card template is attached.

<http://www.tsa.gov/travelers/airtravel/specialneeds/index.shtm>

While using this card does not exempt anyone from screening, we appreciate your organizations' willingness to help us to publicize and educate your members about the template, and hope they will find these cards useful to communicate sensitive information discreetly.

I appreciate that you took the time to share your concerns with us and hope this information is helpful. I also hope you will consider attending the meeting with Mr. Sawyer later this month. If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me personally or TSA's Special Counselor Kimberly Walton at (571) 227-2379.

Sincerely yours,



John S. Pistole
Administrator

*Thanks for your
insights.*

Attachment