

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 13, 2025

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Ave SE  
Washington, DC 20590

The Honorable Michael Whitaker  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Secretary Buttigieg and Administrator Whitaker,

We write regarding several Israeli airlines potential bids to begin service between Tel Aviv's Ben Gurion Airport (TLV) and New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) or Newark's Liberty International Airport (EWR). As reported in the press, these airlines may include, but are not limited to [Tech-Air](#), [Israir](#), and [Arkia](#).

While our strong preference would be for U.S. carriers to resume their service from the greater New York City area airports that serve our districts, unfortunately, these airlines continue to extend suspensions of their service to TLV. In the absence of U.S. carriers flying this critical route for our constituents, we strongly support additional Israeli carriers providing service between these two deeply connected communities to provide competition and lower customer prices.

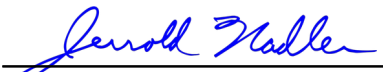
Currently, El Al Airlines enjoys a monopoly on direct flights between New York (and North America) and Israel. Omry Cohen, chief operating officer at El Al Airlines, recently told [NPR](#), "We've seen that our competitors have been, so far, hesitant to return. Some have tried, and others have declared already that they won't be back for a while. And that leaves us with a hundred percent of the market, especially on the direct route [to New York]."

This lack of competition for El Al has led to burdensome price increases for our constituents wishing to visit or welcome family and friends during this difficult time in Israel. The Israeli news outlet *Ynet* [reported](#) in March of 2024 that "Flights to the U.S. during the Passover holiday are currently sold upward of \$2,930 for a [roundtrip] flight." Israeli newspaper *Haaretz* [revealed](#) that "In December [of 2023], a month that usually is characterized by low average ticket prices, the average round trip fare to New York was \$1,598. For those reserving tickets just one or two weeks in advance, when free seats are still available, airfares in April reach \$3,600 for economy class and \$10,500 for business." Recently, the Israeli business publication *Globes* [found](#) that a round trip ticket between Tel Aviv and New York in September of 2023 on El Al Airlines cost \$1,430, while in September of 2024 it cost \$1,759. Additionally, during the Jewish High Holiday season in 2023, a roundtrip ticket cost \$1,500, while in 2024, a roundtrip ticket cost \$2,000."

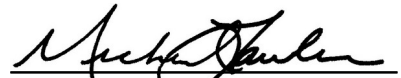
We believe that there must be competition between airlines in the greater New York City area and the Tel Aviv market in order to ensure American consumers and their loved ones are not price gouged in this time of war. Crucial to that effort is your expedited consideration of any application that may come before you from an Israeli airline, especially for low-cost direct service between the greater New York area and Tel Aviv. Ensuring that such service is able to begin swiftly will provide a much-needed additional link between our communities and Israel, when such a connection is more critical than ever to many of our constituents.

We thank you for being excellent partners in implementing the U.S.-Israel Air Transport Agreement. We hope you will work with any Israeli airline that should submit an application and request an expedited review and fair consideration consistent with applicable laws, regulations, and rules.

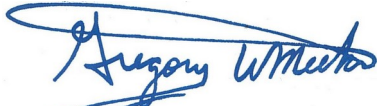
Sincerely,



Jerrold Nadler  
Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



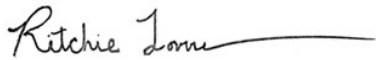
Michael V. Lawler  
Michael V. Lawler  
Member of Congress



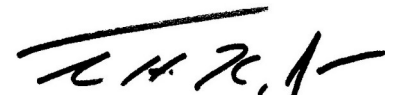
Gregory W. Meeks  
Gregory W. Meeks  
Member of Congress



Nick LaLota  
Nick LaLota  
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres  
Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress




Thomas H. Kean, Jr.  
Thomas H. Kean, Jr.  
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi  
Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress




Laura A. Gillen  
Laura A. Gillen  
Member of Congress



---

Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



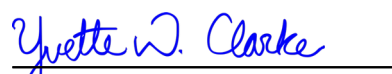
---

Dan Goldman  
Member of Congress



---

Nellie Pou  
Member of Congress



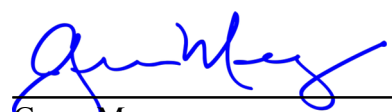
---

Yvette D. Clarke  
Member of Congress




---

George Latimer  
Member of Congress




---

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



---

Mikie Sherrill  
Member of Congress



---

Robert J. Menendez  
Member of Congress