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April 8, 2025

Aloha,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to Blue Hawaiian Helicopters' petition for an exemption from the essential air safety regulation that mandates a minimum flight altitude of 1,500 feet for air tours in Hawai'i. This regulation is critical for maintaining the safety of air travel over the islands, particularly due to the challenging terrain and unpredictable weather conditions in areas like the Island of Kaua'i where this exemption would apply.

Blue Hawaiian's request to fly below 1,500 feet in certain regions, including razorback ridge crossings on the Island of Kaua'i, would increase the risks of accidents and make air tour operations even more hazardous. Between 2006 and 2024, there have been 31 fatal aircraft crashes in Hawai'i, with significant fatalities on Kaua'i. For example, a tour helicopter crash off the coast of Kaua'i killed three people in 2024, and in 2019 a pilot and six passengers lost their lives off the coast of Kekaha when the pilot reportedly lost sight of the mountainous terrain before crashing.

Granting Blue Hawaiian's exemption would not only put public safety at risk but also exacerbate the current noise disturbances caused by air tours in Hawai'i. Despite some discussions between Blue Hawaiian executives and community advocates, there are still significant concerns that have not been addressed, including the effect of lower flight paths on neighborhoods. Helicopter noise already causes considerable disruption to local residents and visitors, and allowing flights below 1,500 feet would only worsen this issue. The community must be properly consulted on the potential impacts of the proposed changes.

For these reasons, I urge the Federal Aviation Administration to deny this petition and uphold the 1,500-foot minimum altitude regulation. Granting this exemption would set a dangerous precedent and undermine years of efforts to improve safety and protect the quality of life for Hawaii's residents.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

With aloha,



Ed Case  
Member of Congress