



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Marisol Alcantara

## #UNITED AGAINST CRUELTY: Senator Alcantara, joined by Kokito's family, leads 'dog-in' at LaGuardia demanding justice

SENATOR ALCANTARA March 22, 2018

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**Queens, NY — Senator Marisol Alcantara (D-Manhattan)**, joined by Kokito's family, animal activists and their pets led a 'dog-in' as they *#UnitedAgainstCruelty* after the 10-month-old French bulldog was killed on a United Airlines flight last week. A flight attendant stowed the puppy in a overhead compartment on a flight from Houston to New York, depriving him of ventilation.

Senator Alcantara rallied with Kokito's family Sophia Ceballos and Catalina Robledo, animal activists and their pets, at LaGuardia Airport's Terminal A on Sunday, as she unveiled "Kokito's Law," a Pet Passenger Bill of Rights set to be introduced in the New York State Senate.

"Make no bones about it, United is in the dog house and we will not tolerate their cruelty towards animals. We are here to demand justice for Kokito and all of the living creatures who perished or were injured in the careless hands of United, and we want to make sure this never happens again. I have introduced a Pet Passenger Bill of Rights because no animal should ever have to suffer like this again," **said Senator Alcantara.**

Kokito's Law will establish clear rules and rights for pets on flights:

- Placing pets in overhead storage compartments is explicitly banned.
- Passengers traveling with pets have the same rights as every passenger onboard.
- Pet passengers must be given reasonable access to food, water and necessary medications in the event of a long flight or flight delay.
- Pets traveling in cargo areas must be in a pressurized, ventilated and climate-controlled environment at all times
- Pets in cargo areas must be safely secured
- Reasonable efforts, such as late boarding and prompt removal, to minimize the amount of time spent in the cargo compartment must be for pets when possible
- Any pet traveling in the cargo compartment must be in an approved pet carriers that is labeled with owner contact information and destination at all times
- Pets being handled and transported on the ground, must be secure, in climate-controlled transport in all weather conditions, including protection from rain, snow, sunlight and extreme temperatures.
- Require adequate food, water, shelter, sanitation and supervision to accommodate pets during long connection times or extended periods on the ground.
- Require all companion animals and their approved pet carriers are labeled with owner contact information and destination at all times on the ground.
- All carriers shall provide training in the safe and humane transport of companion animals to their employees or contractors assigned or reasonably expected to handle or encounter companion animals in the performance of their duties.
- All carriers shall make available to consumers clear and conspicuous notice of these protections at the time of ticketing. Notice of these protections shall also be displayed at all services desks and in other locations where companion animals are boarded.

More importantly, Kokito's Law establishes the rights that pets must be afforded not only in New York, but across the nation through the actions of our federal government.

Last week, Senator Alcantara called for a criminal investigation into the incident and introduced legislation to create a Pet Passenger Bill of Rights to ensure that animals traveling on board planes do not meet the same fate Kokito did. In a letter to United CEO Oscar Munoz she demanded the airline correct its policies and employee training to prevent further incidents from occurring.

Senator Alcantara also sent a letter requesting an investigation to Queens District Attorney Richard Brown, who is investigating the matter.

In 2017, United lead the way in animal deaths and injuries amongst airlines. **The U.S. Department of Transportation recorded 40 injuries and pet deaths on airlines, 31 resulted on United.**

"The recent death of a dog on a United Airlines flight was a terrible tragedy that should never have happened," said **Bill Ketzer, ASPCA Senior Legislative Director for the Northeastern Region**. "The ASPCA supports banning the placement of animals in overhead compartments of airplanes to make clear that this cannot happen in the future. Pets should always be safe and comfortable during any form of transportation and our policies need to recognize them as important members of our families."

"There's absolutely no excuse for the death of Kokito. Anyone with common sense or compassion would understand you don't put a dog or any other living being in an overhead bin. United Airlines needs to clean up its act when it comes to companion animal. A 10 month old puppy died while a 10 year old German Shepherd was flown to Japan when it was

supposed to go to Kansas. Dogs and cats aren't boxed cargo. They're members of our families and should be treated as such," **said NYS Animal Protection Federation Executive Director Libby Post.**

"It is high time that we, as a society, start to recognize, in the form of legislation and laws, the importance of our treatment of animals, who we know are sentient, intelligent, and capable of suffering. This bill is a wonderful and necessary step with respect to that recognition," **said League of Humane Voters Litigation Attorney and Animal Rights Advocate Nora Constance Marino, Esq.**

"Kokito was unique, and he's irreplaceable to his family. An animal is not a piece of lost luggage, and refunded tickets and fees will never make Kokito's family whole again," **said Animal Legal Defense Fund Executive Director Stephen Wells.** "As we mourn Kokito's death, we look forward to working with Senator Alcantara on the Pet Passenger Bill of Rights to ensure that companion animals traveling on planes are all treated with compassion and respect."