S. 4623 Fly Safe and Healthy Act of 2020
Questions and Answers

What can passengers expect when they go to the airport?

Depending on where passengers are traveling, their travel experience may not change at all as a result of the pilot program. The TSA pilot program at first would be implemented at a limited number of airports to test technologies and protocols for taking people's temperatures. Different technologies are already in use at international airports and a limited number of U.S. airports, so some travelers may already be familiar with the technology. They may include thermal imaging cameras that are capable of detecting a fever, no-touch infrared thermometers, or other hand held equipment.

At locations where thermal imaging cameras are used, people would simply walk through the area where the camera is located. If the camera detects that the person has a fever, they would be subject to secondary screening to verify the camera's reading. The TSA Administrator would have the authority to contract with medical professionals to conduct the secondary screening, which could involve the medical professional using a hand held thermometer to verify the individual's temperature. The medical professional may ask the individual questions to help assess the cause of their fever (e.g., have you been exposed to someone with COVID-19?, do you have a medical condition that causes you to have an elevated temperature?). If the secondary screening shows the person has a fever, a TSA supervisor will inform the individual that they are not permitted into the sterile area of the airport and are not permitted fly. Airlines are required to provide those not permitted to fly to change or cancel their flight at no cost to the passenger.

How are you protecting people's privacy?

The Administrator would be required to address mechanisms for protecting people's privacy and medical information as part of the procedures developed to implement the pilot program. To protect individual's privacy, in current practice internationally and at U.S. airports, authorities administering temperature check programs have taken precautions to ensure that a person's image is not captured by the thermal imaging camera, or if it is, that it is not retained for a lengthy period of time. They also limit the amount of information collected during the screening process. To protect their medical privacy, secondary screening is typically conducted in a more private area. The expectation is that the Administrator would take similar precautions as part of the pilot program.

TSA is a security screening agency. Won't this detract from their core responsibilities?

The pilot program is intended to test the technologies to determine the most efficient and effective way to conduct temperature checks to minimize the impact on passengers and the TSA. TSA has indicated that it has the workforce to conduct the screenings and the bill requires that the Administrator provide those employees with training on the equipment, policies, and procedures to implement the program. The bill also permits the Administrator to contract with outside parties to provide additional expertise, including for secondary screening.

Why not do the temperature checks at the entrance to the airport to make sure everyone who steps foot in the airport is screened?

The TSA screening checkpoints are a consolidated location where passengers and individuals must pass through to access the sterile area of the airport and board aircraft, and are run by the federal government. Having the TSA conduct the pilot program will provide a consistent program at airports. Some airports are testing thermal imaging equipment at entrances to airports or at the arrival and departure gates, and this pilot program would not interfere with those programs. In fact, the Administrator of TSA is encouraged to work with on-going programs to share data and information about best practices to help shape the pilot program.

How much will the program cost?
TSA has estimated that it would cost around $60 million to procure and install temperature screening equipment for a two-year program. This estimate was based on some preliminary testing and research TSA completed earlier this year. TSA has also indicated that it has the workforce to implement the program.

Who is making the final decisions about whether someone can fly?

The Administrator will establish protocols to determine who makes the final decision. The bill allows for the Administrator to use secondary screening and to contract for those services, which may include the use of medical professionals.

What happens to a passenger who is denied entry to the sterile area of the airport? What about employees who are denied access?

Any passenger who is denied entry to the sterile area of the airport—or not allowed to fly—would be entitled to cancel or change their flight at no cost to them. The person should seek the advice of a medical professional or public health authorities on what further action to take.

Employees—such as airport workers, flight attendants, pilots—would be subject to their individual employer's leave policies and procedures.

Is this the most cost effective way to protect against COVID-19 spread?

The CDC and public health authorities have emphasized several actions that people should take to protect against the spread of COVID-19, to create a layered approach that will minimize the risk of spreading the disease, including: (1) wear a mask, (2) keep six feet of distance from others, (3) and use good hygiene practices. They also recommend that you stay home if you are sick and get tested if you have COVID-19 symptoms or may have been exposed. Temperature checks at airports are one additional layer that will encourage those who are sick to stay home and to prevent those who are symptomatic and identifiably sick from flying.

While there are no current federal requirements, airlines have also implemented measures, such as mask and social distancing requirements in waiting areas and on aircraft and enhanced

cleaning measures. TSA has also taken similar precautions are screening checkpoints. These in conjunction with temperature checks and other health measures create a safety net to mitigate the risk of COVID-19 transmission. The Administration's Runway to Recovery, the International Aviation Transportation Association's Biosafety for Air Transport: a Roadmap for Restarting Aviation, and the World Health Organization's public health considerations while resuming international travel recognize the use of temperature screening as part of a layered approach to protecting passengers. Experts also say that the optics of the government taking action makes people more inclined to follow other health related recommendations, such as social distancing and wearing masks.

Won't this slow down the screening process? Won't it make me be too close to other passengers?

There are non-invasive ways to take people's temperatures for fevers, which would help to keep the flow through TSA screening checkpoints. The Administrator has the flexibility under the pilot program to test different technologies in a variety of operating scenarios to ensure that screening check point backups do not occur.

Public health authorities question the value of temperature checks and the U.S. government is stopping health screenings for international passengers arriving in the Unites States. Why will this pilot program be effective?

This TSA pilot program would serve a few goals: (1) to deter sick passengers and other individuals from going to airports and risking potential spread of COVID-19; (2) to catch symptomatic and identifiably ill individuals and provide authority for them to be denied access to the sterile area of the airport; and (3) test the technology, protocols, and capabilities for TSA to conduct temperatures checks. The first two goals are a helpful for protecting against the spread of COVID-19, in addition to several other protective measures that are in place.

The third goal helps the U.S. government not only in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, but to build the institutional knowledge and capability to respond to future pandemics. Countries like Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and South Korea that had previously responded to SARS and MERS outbreaks, including instituting temperature checks, were able to ramp up quickly to respond to COVID-19. Building up our response capacity in the United States is essential to protect the American people from future viruses or public health issues.

What if someone take Advil or Tylenol to reduce their fever or is otherwise asymptomatic?

While the temperature screening won't be effective at catching people who have tried to "beat the system" by taking fever reducing medications or because they are COVID-19 positive but asymptomatic, it does provide a layer of protection to deter people who are sick from coming to the airport, communicating the risks associated with the virus, and for catching people are visibly sick.

What if I have a fever because of another illness that is not COVID-19? What if my child is teething and has a fever?

The bill would require the Administrator to account for these issues as part of the program. The secondary screening required under the bill is intended to provide the ability for a medical professional to further assess an individual's personal circumstances and medical history.

Wouldn't rapid COVID-19 testing at airports provide more certainty about whether someone has COVID-19?

Right now reliable rapid COVID-19 testing is not available at a scalable and affordable level. When it becomes available, it would be an additional layer of protection for passengers and airline employees. The temperature checks are an immediate step that the federal government can take to better protect the passengers and employee health.