



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY COUNCIL

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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## **Maryland Study Says Airport Flight Patterns Negatively Affect Human Health with \$40 Million per Year in Health-Care Costs**

*Ellicott City, MD (September 28, 2022)* -- Controversial flight paths at Baltimore/Washington International Thurgood Marshall (BWI) airport have negative health effects that will, on average, cost Marylanders in excess of \$40 million per year over the next 30 years, according to a new study from Dr. Zafar Zafari and Jeong-eun Park at the University of Maryland's School of Pharmacy. The report titled "Projecting the Health and Economic Burden of Aircraft Noise" focuses on the health impacts of concentrated flight paths at BWI airport since the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) implemented the Next Generation Air Transportation System (NextGen) in 2015.

The results of this state-funded study indicate that the projected economic advantages to the region of the new flight paths are significantly offset by their negative health effects, which were measured through quality-adjusted life years and the medical economic burden on affected populations. The study states that the total cost of hospitalizations, as well as direct and indirect costs of disease and lessening of life outcomes, will be approximately \$1.2 billion spread out over 30 years, or \$800 million in today's dollars. The study concludes, "Therefore, public health measures to mitigate noise are warranted."

The DC Metroplex BWI Community Roundtable, an advisory group working on noise mitigation strategies, was a strong advocate for this study of health effects on communities living within the BWI airport flight paths. "This study confirms what communities under the concentrated NextGen flight paths have been saying for years. We know that many people in our region live with unremitting, near constant noise many miles from the airport. No one considered the effect this would have on people on the ground," said Debbie MacDonald, chairperson of the Roundtable. "Since the FAA has made it clear they are not going to substantially change NextGen, we need to talk about state and federal mitigations beyond wall insulation and window treatments."

Funding for this study was appropriated through the Maryland General Assembly thanks to efforts by Senators Clarence Lam and Guy Guzzone and Delegate Terri Hill. "As physicians, Delegate Hill and I have long suspected that the increased aircraft noise at BWI would have health implications. We now have quantifiable evidence that it's not just an inconvenience and a potential reduction in property values," said Senator Lam. "The cost of billions of dollars of diseases and disability, not to mention reduced productivity and quality of life, need to be taken into account in any cost benefit analysis involving changes in operations or services at the airport."

The Howard County Council has long pledged its support for the Roundtable's efforts. Howard County Councilmember Deb Jung, who serves as the Howard County Council's representative on the Roundtable and the co-chair of the Roundtable's Legislative Committee said, "This study highlights the need for action. An average \$40 million annual loss to human health is untenable. On the local level, we have seen exponential growth without regard to the people on the ground who live below these concentrated flight paths. We need our State government to address the increasing number of nighttime flights and curb airport decisions to increase the quantity of flights until the Maryland Aviation Administration demonstrates it will mitigate the associated and serious health impacts.

At the Federal level, we need to focus on legislation that affects airplane noise and pollution through the FAA reauthorization bill. The current bill expires on September 30, 2023. Senator Van Hollen's office has begun to develop proposals including those relating to subject matter experts, the changing of metrics for measuring community noise pollution, the regulation of general aviation activities to limit repetitive noise exposure, fanned dispersal, and funding for the Environmental Protection Agency to possibly regulate particulate matter from aviation activities. We need to contact our Congressional representatives to urge them to do something now."

The report is available online [here](#).