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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1010

April 10, 2019

COMMITTEE ON
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WATER, POWER AND OCEANS
POLICY COMMITTEE

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

I write today to share my concerns with the illegal subsidies being provided by the government of Qatar to “Air Italy” — known until late as Meridiana — in contravention of our Open Skies Agreement.

The United States has 126 Open Skies agreements with other governments that are designed to enable our airlines to compete on a level playing field with foreign competitors. However, Qatar has long undermined both the spirit and the letter of the Open Skies agreement by giving Qatar Airways massive subsidies which in turn provide it an unfair competitive advantage. It follows that Qatar — and other Gulf carriers — operate 29 daily flights to the U.S. while U.S. carriers operate zero flights into these markets.

In recognition of this, last year you brought Qatar to the table and successfully negotiated a deal to increase Qatari transparency and bring a stop to the illegal subsidies provided to Qatar Airways. Unfortunately, through purchasing a large stake in Meridiana — a failing regional carrier in Italy — rebranding it “Air Italy”, and transferring to it widebody jets for transatlantic service to five U.S. cities, Qatar continues to operate in violation of your agreement. Simply put, “Air Italy” is effectively a corporate shell for Qatar Airways to continue the very unfair trading practices you rightly sought to rectify.

Mr. President, whether it be through renegotiating NAFTA or KORUS, the great progress you have made in confronting China’s unfair trade practices, exiting the Paris Climate Accord and the Iran Nuclear Deal, or on so many other fronts, your presidency has been about putting America First and fighting on behalf of working Americans. Over and over, you have stood up for the interests of America and our citizens. These actions by the Qatari government undermine your efforts, stifle competition, and cost Americans their jobs.

Mr. President, just as you have done before, I urge you to continue standing up to the Qataris and insist on their adherence to the deal they are actively violating.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jody Hice". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jody" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Hice".

Jody Hice
Member of Congress