

June 26, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Senate Committee on Commerce, Science  
and Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member  
Senate Committee on Commerce,  
Science, and Transportation  
U.S. Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

We are members of the advisory board for the Rally for Air Service Coalition, a diverse group of aviation stakeholders made up of 96 airports, chambers of commerce, economic development associations, state departments of transportation, educational institutions, and others. We write to urge Congress to address the ongoing and persistent pilot shortage in the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization, and strongly urge that the bill should expeditiously proceed through Congress with solutions to the shortage and provisions that will ensure a robust supply of quality pilots are produced through the training pipeline.

We understand that a recent Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation markup of FAA reauthorization legislation was postponed in part due to disagreements over proposed solutions related to the shortage. Over the course of many months, we have worked with stakeholders and lawmakers to develop and advocate for these solutions, and we would like our voices to be heard as part of the debate. We provided input in a letter to this Committee in March 2023 which can be found [here](#). Every day that the shortage goes on without any kind of solution in place means less air service for our members and raises the specter of another airport losing complete air service, impacting the traveling public and local economies.

Our Coalition members experience the effects of the pilot shortage every day. Despite increased FAA pilot certifications in 2022, there are still not enough pilots qualified for hire at a commercial airline. Today, 321 airports in the contiguous United States, or 75 percent, have lost on average 26 percent of their flights.<sup>1</sup> Sixteen airports have lost all their service. Absent immediate policy action by Congress, the shortfall of pilots could reach over 38,000 by 2030, including 15,000 mandatory retirements over the next five years alone.<sup>2</sup> Solutions to the pilot shortage exist and the need for them is great; however, there isn't one silver bullet. Short-term and long-term solutions must be advanced concurrently to stem the loss of air service and prevent another shortage from occurring in the future. Short-term solutions could include raising the pilot age and making it easier to hire fully qualified foreign pilots. Longer-term solutions must address workforce development deficiencies, such as financial, socioeconomic, and geographical barriers to flight education, and training methods that could be improved to produce more quality pilots. Safety is paramount in the development and advancement of all solutions. We do not believe in cutting

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<sup>1</sup> OAG published schedules July 2019 vs. July 2023.

<sup>2</sup> <https://wefly4you.com, Pilot Scarcity - 2022, What Did Not Happen, May 2023, Slides 10 and 15.>

corners to achieve outcomes. None of these solutions would jeopardize the safety of our national air transportation system.

We are counting on Congress to take the lead to address this vital issue, and we stand ready to assist you in your efforts. Thank you in advance for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce



Kalamazoo | Battle Creek International  
Airport

**CC:**

**Members of the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation**