



September 25, 2018

The Honorable Steve Knight  
Chairman  
House Small Business Committee  
Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Stephanie Murphy  
Ranking Member  
House Small Business Committee  
Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Knight and Ranking Member Murphy,

The Regional Airline Association (RAA) would like to express strong support for the September 26<sup>th</sup> hearing titled, "Troubled Skies: The Aviation Workforce Shortage's Impact on Small Businesses." The RAA serves as a unified voice of advocacy and support for North American regional airlines aimed at promoting a safe, reliable, and healthy regional airline industry. RAA member airlines employ 59,000 individuals, operate 42 percent of the flights, and provide the only source of scheduled, passenger air service approximately two-thirds of the nation's airports.

As the career entry point for most commercial airline pilots and the primary source of pilots for the major carriers, the shortage is a dire problem for our industry. Failure to act will threaten the economic well-being of countless communities across the United States especially those that receive service exclusively from regional airlines. Hundreds of U.S. communities have already experienced significant air service reductions, and some have lost air service entirely. These losses are occurring while demand for air travel is growing and despite a period of economic expansion in the United States, when communities would ordinarily experience higher frequencies and more service options. While service losses will affect every corner of the country, small and rural communities who are overwhelmingly serviced by regional airlines have been hardest hit and will remain the most vulnerable as the shortage worsens. According to a study by InterVISTAS for the Regional Air Service Alliance, the smallest airports (non-hub and small hub airports in the 48 contiguous states) drive well over \$121 billion in economic activity and support more than 1.1 million jobs.

The shortage is being driven by a federally -mandated, retirement age of 65 years for Part 121 pilots and a growing demand for air travel. By 2026, about 27,000 pilots will reach the mandatory retirement age, and the University of North Dakota predicts a cumulative shortfall of pilots at major airlines alone will near 15,000 pilots.<sup>1</sup> To put that shortfall in perspective, regional airlines employ approximately 20,000 pilots. Additionally, Boeing 2018 Pilot Outlook<sup>2</sup> predicts that North America will need 206,000 pilots over the next 20 years, or slightly more than 10,000 new pilots each year on average, to keep pace with demand for air reservice and retirements. According to the FAA's airmen statistics<sup>3</sup>, only 4,449 original airmen Airline Transport Certificates (ATP), or the certificate required to serve as a Part 121 airline pilot,

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<sup>1</sup> See University of North Dakota Pilot Supply Forecast 2016

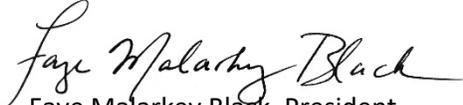
<sup>2</sup> See Boeing 2018 Pilot Outlook, <https://www.boeing.com/commercial/market/pilot-technician-outlook/2018-pilot-outlook/>

<sup>3</sup> See U.S. Civil Airmen Statistics, [https://www.faa.gov/data\\_research/aviation\\_data\\_statistics/civil\\_airmen\\_statistics/](https://www.faa.gov/data_research/aviation_data_statistics/civil_airmen_statistics/)

were issued for 2017. Overall, interest in piloting has been shrinking: between 1990 -2017, the FAA has issued 52% fewer total pilot certificates with all certificate types declining. The U.S. is fundamentally not producing enough pilots to meet the needs of our commercial and business sectors.

It is essential for the federal government to partner with industry and other aviation stakeholders to combat the pilot shortage and its economic repercussions on small business. A robust aviation industry that supports global connectivity is essential for our country's competitiveness and must be preserved and expanded. We look forward to working with the members of the House Small Business Committee to grow the aviation workforce. Please don't hesitate to contact Drew Jacoby Lemos, Director of Government Affairs if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

  
Faye Malarkey Black, President  
Regional Airline Association