

FAA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024: STAKE- HOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON IMPLEMENTATION

(118-75)

HEARING
BEFORE THE
SUBCOMMITTEE ON
AVIATION
OF THE
COMMITTEE ON
TRANSPORTATION AND
INFRASTRUCTURE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
ONE HUNDRED EIGHTEENTH CONGRESS
SECOND SESSION

DECEMBER 11, 2024

Printed for the use of the
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure



Available online at: [https://www.govinfo.gov/committee/house-transportation?path=/
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U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

58-898 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2025

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U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

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DECEMBER 9, 2024

SUMMARY OF SUBJECT MATTER

TO: Members, Subcommittee on Aviation
FROM: Staff, Subcommittee on Aviation
RE: Subcommittee Hearing on “*FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024: Stakeholder Perspectives on Implementation*”

I. PURPOSE

The Subcommittee on Aviation of the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure will meet on Wednesday, December 11, 2024, at 10:00 a.m. in 2167 Rayburn House Office Building to hold a hearing entitled, “*FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024: Stakeholder Perspectives on Implementation*.” The hearing will provide representatives of the aerospace industry an opportunity to share their perspectives on the progress made by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and Department of Transportation (DOT) in implementing the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The Subcommittee will hear testimony from witnesses representing the Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA), Wing, the General Aviation Manufacturer’s Association (GAMA), and the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD).

II. BACKGROUND

On May 16, 2024, President Biden signed into law H.R. 3935, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 (FAARA 2024; P.L. 118–63).¹ FAARA 2024 reauthorizes civil aviation programs within the FAA and DOT through fiscal year (FY) 2028 and reauthorizes the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) through the same period. Enactment of FAARA 2024 followed a series of four short-term extensions of authorizations after the most recent long-term reauthorization bill, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018 (FAARA 2018; P.L. 115–254), expired on October 1, 2023.² Support for final passage of H.R. 3935 was overwhelmingly bipartisan in both chambers; the Senate passed an amendment to H.R. 3935 with a vote of 88–4 and the House agreed to the amendment with a vote of 387–26.³

¹Press Release, THE WHITE HOUSE, *Bill Signed: H.R. 3935*, (May 16, 2024), available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/05/16/press-release-bill-signed-h-r-3935/>.

²See Div. B, Title II of the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2024 and Other Extensions Act, Pub. L. No. 118–15, 137 Stat. 71; Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2023, Part II, Pub. Law No. 118–34; Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2024, Pub. L. No. 118–41; Airport and Airway Extension Act of 2024, Part II, Pub. L. No. 118–60.

³CONCUR IN THE S. AMDT TO H.R. 3935, CLERK, UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, *Roll Call 200*, 118th Cong., 2nd Session, (May 15, 2024), available at <https://clerk.house.gov/Votes/2024200>; H.R. 3935, as amended, CLERK, UNITED STATES SENATE, *Roll Call 162*, 118th

Continued

III. KEY PILLARS OF THE FAA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024

In developing FAARA 2024, the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure received over 2,100 unique requests from Members of Congress and industry stakeholders and held five hearings focused on reauthorizing civil aviation programs in the first four months of the 118th Congress.⁴ FAARA 2024 altogether contains approximately 500 requirements for the FAA and DOT, including mandates to take various actions, procure equipment, issue regulations, prepare reports to Congress, and conduct studies, among other responsibilities. This Summary of Subject Matter highlights some of FAARA 2024's key mandates.

UPHOLDING AVIATION SAFETY

Aviation safety in the United States has greatly improved over the last decade. Since 2012, only three fatalities have occurred on scheduled domestic passenger air carriers within the United States as a result of aircraft accidents compared to the decade prior, which saw 140 passenger fatalities.⁵ In 11 of the last 14 years, there have been no passenger fatalities in scheduled United States domestic passenger air carrier operations.⁶ Despite these marked improvements, an alarming number of safety incidents have occurred in the last few years.⁷ For example, two aircraft came within less than 200 feet of colliding at Austin-Bergstrom International Airport on February 4, 2023, when a FedEx aircraft was cleared to land on the same runway as a Southwest aircraft was taking off, carrying 128 passengers and crew members.⁸ The increase in safety incidents and near misses underscores the need for continued improvements in aviation safety. FAARA 2024 includes nearly 80 provisions aimed at enhancing and improving America's gold standard in aviation safety.⁹

Zero Tolerance for Near Misses and Incursions

Section 347 requires the FAA to establish the Runway Safety Council to develop strategies to address airport surface safety risks, among other tasks, to improve surface safety. Additionally, the FAA is tasked with identifying and deploying technologies, equipment, and systems, such as surface surveillance and detection systems that improve onboard situational awareness for flight crewmembers, to enhance the safety of ground operations at all medium hub, large hub, and other airports that lack surface surveillance capabilities. Most notably, this section requires airport surface surveillance systems to be deployed and operational at all medium and large hub airports within five years.¹⁰

Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing Program

In order to create a process for open and free-flowing sharing of information, the FAA introduced the Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing (ASIAS) system.¹¹ This program is a comprehensive database of safety data and analysis from government and industry sources, including data from voluntary sources. Section 348 requires the FAA to implement improvements to the ASIAS program with respect to safety data sharing and risk mitigation. Specifically, the new law requires FAA to improve ASIAS by: developing predictive capabilities to anticipate emerging

Cong., 2nd Session, (May 9, 2024), available at https://www.senate.gov/legislative/LIS/roll_call_votes/vote1182/vote_118_2_00162.htm.

⁴FAA Reauthorization: *Securing the Future of General Aviation: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 3, 2023); FAA Reauthorization: *Navigating the Comprehensive Passenger Experience: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 20, 2023); FAA Reauthorization: *Harnessing the Evolution of Flight to Deliver for the American People: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 27, 2023); FAA Reauthorization: *Examining the Current and Future Challenges Facing the Aerospace Workforce: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Apr. 14, 2023); *Turbulence Ahead: Consequences of Delaying a Long-Term FAA Bill: Hearing Before the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Nov. 27, 2023).

⁵NTSB, U.S. CIVIL AVIATION STATISTICS (2021), available at <https://www.nts.gov/safety/Pages/research.aspx>, (last visited Dec. 4, 2024).

⁶*Id.*

⁷Sydney Ember and Emily Steel, *Airline Close Calls Happen Far More Often Than Previously Known*, N.Y. TIMES, (Aug. 21, 2023), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2023/08/21/business/airline-safety-close-calls.html>.

⁸David Koenig, *NTSB says and air traffic controllers' faulty assumption led to a close call between planes in Texas*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, (June 6, 2024), available at <https://apnews.com/article/runway-close-call-texas-airport-ntsb-2171cddd3c38b762872b5919344d3a02>.

⁹FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63.

¹⁰*Id.* at § 347.

¹¹FAA Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing System, FAA, available at <https://www.asias.faa.gov/apex/f?p=100:1>.

safety risks, establishing a robust process for prioritizing request for safety information, identifying industry segments not yet included in the program to increase the rate of participation, establishing processes for obtaining and analyzing aggregate data, and integrating safety data obtained from unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) operators.¹²

National Transportation Safety Board

As the independent Federal agency responsible for investigating all civil aviation accidents, in addition to accidents in other modes of transportation, the NTSB plays an important role in transportation safety. The NTSB was last authorized in FAARA 2018.¹³ In addition to reauthorizing the Board's statutory authorities, title XII of FAARA 2024 provides updates to the safety agency's authorization.

Detering Crewmember Interference

Amid troubling incidents involving unruly passengers in recent years, the FAARA 2024 will help ensure flight crews and passengers are protected.¹⁴ Section 432 directs the FAA to convene a task force to develop standards and best practices relating to suspected interference with cabin or flight crew, security screening personnel, or flight attendants. This section also requires the FAA to modify the required pre-flight briefings to inform passengers that it is against Federal law to assault or threaten to assault any individual onboard an aircraft or to interfere with duties of a crewmember. The FAA continues partnering with the Transportation Security Administration (TSA) and is leveraging the existing Inflight Security Work Group to jointly develop best practices to comply with this section.¹⁵

REVITALIZING GENERAL AVIATION

General aviation (GA) is commonly referred to as the backbone of the aviation system as it underpins the aviation industry and is an important part of our national economy. According to a 2018 study, GA supported more than 1.2 million jobs, generated \$247 billion in output, and contributed \$128 billion to the United States Gross Domestic Product (GDP).¹⁶ Given GA's importance to the aviation ecosystem, FAARA 2024 included the first-ever GA title focused on revitalizing the GA community and improving the services FAA provides to general aviators.

Expanding BasicMed

In 2016, Congress established BasicMed, a medical qualification that allows private pilots to be approved by a state-licensed physician to exercise flying privileges in lieu of receiving a third-class medical certificate.¹⁷ Section 828 increases the utility of BasicMed by increasing the number of allowable passengers from five to six, increasing the number of occupants from six to seven, and increasing the maximum takeoff weight from 6,000 pounds to 12,500 pounds, while excluding certain transport category rotorcraft.¹⁸ Additionally, section 815 allows Designated Pilot Examiners (DPEs) administering proficiency checks or tests to airman to be able to do so under BasicMed so long as the aircraft the flight is being conducted in is eligible for purposes of a BasicMed operation.¹⁹ The FAA issued a final rule on November 15, 2024, updating BasicMed regulations to reflect the changes made by sections 828 and 815.²⁰

Flight Examinations

Several GA operators and flight schools assert there is a Nationwide shortage of DPEs necessary to meet the needs of student pilots and pilots seeking additional

¹² FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, § 348.

¹³ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, Pub. Law No. 115–254, Division C.

¹⁴ See e.g. Mark Walker, *F.A.A. Refers More Unruly Passenger Cases to Justice Department*, N.Y. TIMES, (Aug. 21, 2024), available at <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/08/21/us/politics/faa-unruly-passengers-fbi.html>.

¹⁵ *2024 FAA Reauthorization, Implementation Update*, FAA, Power Point Presentation to H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure staff (Oct. 8, 2024,) (on file with Comm.).

¹⁶ Dan Namowitz, *GA a Force in National, Local Economies*, AOPA, (Feb. 19, 2020), available at <https://www.aopa.org/news-and-media/all-news/2020/february/19/ga-a-force-in-national-and-local-economies>.

¹⁷ FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016, Pub. Law No. 114–190, 130 Stat. 641.

¹⁸ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, § 828.

¹⁹ *Id.* at § 815.

²⁰ *Regulatory Updates to BasicMed*, 89 Fed. Reg. 90572 (Nov. 18, 2024).

certifications and ratings.²¹ Section 833 requires the FAA to establish an office to provide oversight and facilitate national coordination of DPEs.²² The FAA has told Committee staff that it is in the process of setting up an office to focus on DPE oversight as well as working towards fulfilling the reporting requirement found in FAARA 2024.

EAGLE Initiative

In February 2022, the FAA, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), fuel suppliers and distributors, airports, and engine and aircraft manufacturers announced the Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions (EAGLE) Initiative—a collaborative initiative to permit both new and existing GA aircraft to operate lead-free, without compromising aviation safety and the economic and broader public benefits of GA.²³ Section 827 requires the FAA to continue to partner with industry and other Federal Government stakeholders to carry out the EAGLE Initiative through the end of 2030.²⁴

IMPROVING THE PASSENGER EXPERIENCE

The COVID-19 pandemic caused major difficulties for the airline industry, with airline revenue passenger miles falling by 96 percent from January 2020 to April 2020.²⁵ As COVID-19 restrictions began to lift, air carriers experienced a greater than anticipated increase in demand for air travel, leading to capacity and staffing constraints, which then posed significant operational challenges.²⁶ Compounding those events, staffing shortages at air traffic control facilities, severe weather, and pandemic-driven changes in air traffic further contributed to numerous delays and cancellations across the country.²⁷

As the airline industry continues to navigate air travel post COVID-19 pandemic, the Committee understands the importance of continuing to improve the comprehensive travel experience for all passengers to ensure that travelers arrive at their destination safely and efficiently. FAARA 2024 included over 30 provisions to enhance the passenger experience and make flying more accessible for individuals with disabilities.²⁸

Passenger Experience Advisory Committee

For commercial airline passengers, the air transportation journey often begins at the curb or parking lot of the departure airport and ends at the same point at the destination airport. During that timeframe, a passenger's unique experience is affected by myriad factors and entities including, but not limited to, airlines, airports, airport contractors and vendors, and air traffic management system and operations. Section 517 creates a Passenger Experience Advisory Committee at the DOT tasked with evaluating and providing recommendations to improve the comprehensive passenger experience.²⁹ The Advisory Committee must submit a report to Congress on its recommendations.

Air Traffic Controller Staffing

For several years, the FAA and the aviation industry have reported a need for a right-sized and qualified FAA workforce commensurate with the Agency's responsibilities. Unfortunately, the pandemic then exacerbated the challenges felt by the Agency's Air Traffic Organization (ATO) in hiring and training air traffic controllers

²¹ Janice Wood, *How much did you pay for your check ride?*, GENERAL AVIATION NEWS, (Oct. 19, 2022), available at <https://generalaviationnews.com/2022/10/31/how-much-did-you-pay-for-your-check-ride/>.

²² FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118-63, § 833.

²³ Press Release, FAA, *FAA, Industry Chart Path to Eliminate Lead Emissions from General Aviation by the end of 2030*, (Feb. 23, 2022) available at <https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/faq-industry-chart-path-eliminate-lead-emissions-general-aviation-end-2030>.

²⁴ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118-63, § 827.

²⁵ *Air Passenger Revenue Miles*, Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis, available at <https://fred.stlouisfed.org/series/AIRRPMTSID11>.

²⁶ Michael B. Baker, *Airlines Prepare for Operational Challenges as Demand Rebounds*, BUSINESS TRAVEL NEWS, (Aug. 4, 2021), available at <https://www.businesstravelnews.com/Transportation/Air/Airlines-Prepare-for-Operational-Challenges-as-Demand-Rebounds>.

²⁷ Taylor Rains, *Flight cancellations are spiking in part because this air traffic control center in Florida is severely understaffed, airline group says*, BUSINESS INSIDER, (June 24, 2022), available at <https://www.businessinsider.com/air-traffic-control-staffing-shortage-causing-flight-cancellations-alpa-2022-6>. [hereinafter *Business Insider*].

²⁸ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law. No. 118-63.

²⁹ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law. No. 118-63, 138 Stat. 1198.

at a rate necessary to meet increased travel demand.³⁰ In the latest Aerospace forecast for the 2024–2044 period, the FAA notes that “with robust air travel demand growth in 2024 and steady growth thereafter, we expect increased activity growth that has the potential to increase controller workload.”³¹ To directly address the controller workforce bottleneck in the aviation system, section 437 directs the FAA to set the minimum hiring target for new air traffic controllers, for each of FYs 2024 through 2028, to the maximum number of individuals trained at the FAA Air Traffic Control Academy.³² To date, the FAA has fulfilled one of the two mandates incorporated in section 437 and is continuing to work to meet the mandates set forth in this section of the FAARA 2024.³³

Accessibility

The United States Census Bureau estimates that 42.6 million Americans, nearly 13 percent of individuals, have a disability, which may include those related to physical mobility, hearing, vision, or cognition.³⁴ While these Americans face various hurdles in their daily lives, air travel often presents additional unique challenges. The FAARA 2024 included numerous requirements for DOT to improve travel and access for people with disabilities. Sections 542 and 543 direct DOT to issue rulemaking to develop minimum training standards for airline personnel and contractors who assist passengers with disabilities using wheelchairs with boarding or deplaning a commercial flight, as well as standards regarding the stowage of scooters and wheelchairs used by passengers with disabilities onboard commercial aircraft. Additionally, the sections authorize DOT to assess civil penalties in cases where air carriers and foreign air carriers fail to meet the requirements. Separately, section 725 establishes a pilot program under the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) that can be used to fund capital projects to improve airport accessibility in ways that exceed standards and regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act and Rehabilitation Act. As such, the FAA has been directed to develop program guidance letter and work to stand up the pilot program in FY 2025.

HARNESSING NEW AND ADVANCED AVIATION

The FAA has the responsibility to certify, oversee, and regulate the safety and operations of the civil aviation sector, including integrating new entrants like Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) and Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) aircraft into the National Airspace System (NAS).³⁵ Title IX of FAARA 2024 incorporates provisions to foster the safe, efficient, and timely integration of new entrant technologies into the NAS. Like many other innovations of flight, UAS, also known as drones, and electric vertical takeoff and landing (eVTOL) powered-lift aircraft, commonly referred to as AAM vehicles or air taxis, have the potential to change the way we travel and transport goods. Provisions in FAARA 2024 ensure that the FAA is properly positioned to support the safe integration of these new entrant technologies into the NAS while supporting American innovation.

Beyond Visual Line of Sight Drone Operations

UAS operating beyond a remote pilot’s visual line of sight (commonly referred to as BVLOS) presents unique challenges to the FAA’s existing regulatory framework.³⁶ While the FAA has made some progress in approving BVLOS operations over the past several years, the Agency has faced challenges in promulgating regulations to allow greater BVLOS operations. Section 930 directs the FAA to issue a notice of proposed rulemaking (NPRM) to establish a performance-based regulatory pathway for UAS to operate BVLOS.³⁷ Per the new law, the FAA was required to

³⁰ *Turbulence Ahead: Consequences of Delaying a Long-Term FAA Bill: Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong., (Nov. 30, 2023) (statement of Rich Santa, President, National Air Traffic Controllers Association).

³¹ *Supra* note 2, at 4.

³² FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, § 437.

³³ E-mail from Lauren Dudley, Assistant Administrator for Government and Industry Affairs, FAA, to Committee on Transp. and Infrastructure staff (June 14, 2024, 4:55 PM EST) (on file with Comm.).

³⁴ GAO, GAO–21–354, *Passengers with Disabilities: Airport Accessibility Barriers and Practices and DOT’s Oversight of Airlines’ Disability-Related Training* (Apr. 2021).

³⁵ 49 U.S.C. § 106(f)(3).

³⁶ FAA, UNMANNED AIRCRAFT SYSTEMS BEYOND VISUAL LINE OF SIGHT AVIATION RULEMAKING COMMITTEE, FINAL REPORT at 8, (Mar. 10, 2022), available at https://www.faa.gov/regulations_policies/rulemaking/committees/documents/media/UAS_BVLOS_ARC_FINAL_REPORT_03102022.pdf.

³⁷ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, § 930.

issue a BVLOS NPRM by September 16, 2024, however, the Agency has yet to issue the proposed rule; it remains at the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) awaiting final approval.

Powered-Lift Operations for AAM Aircraft

Currently, several AAM aircraft manufacturers are in the process of certifying the design of their aircraft with the FAA and plan to enter into service in the coming years. AAM aircraft operators have long expected to use existing operating procedures for traditional aircraft, however, the FAA has faced challenges in leveraging existing aviation rules for a new class of aircraft. To meet entry into service target dates for AAM manufacturers and operators, and to establish a clear regulatory safety framework for powered-lift aircraft, in early 2023, the FAA declared that it would publish a final Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) for AAM aircraft by “the fourth quarter of 2024.”³⁸ As such, section 955 of the FAARA 2024 required the FAA to publish a final powered-lift SFAR no later than November 16, 2024, and many stakeholders and the Committee were pleased that the FAA accomplished the task a month early when it announced the final SFAR on October 22, 2024.³⁹

Electric Aircraft Infrastructure Pilot Program

Some AAM operators will leverage existing aviation infrastructure, such as airports and heliports, while others may require new facilities, such as vertiports, to accommodate growing operations.⁴⁰ Section 745 establishes a five-year pilot program allowing up to 10 eligible airports to acquire, install, and operate charging equipment for electric aircraft and to construct or modify related infrastructure to support such equipment.

GROWING THE AVIATION WORKFORCE

FAARA 2024 incorporated several provisions to eliminate or alleviate staffing, hiring, and educational bottlenecks most commonly affecting pilots, aircraft mechanics, air traffic controllers, aviation safety inspectors, and other key aviation roles. These aviation professions are closely regulated, require significant training and experience to achieve FAA certification, and are essential to the safe operation of the NAS. Provisions included in FAARA 2024 related to improving FAA services and appropriately streamlining regulatory processes are likely to be highlighted during the hearing as the aviation industry’s growth is highly dependent on adequate staffing, robust investment in FAA resources, and timely decision-making. Provisions of interest to aviation stakeholders range from directing the FAA to promulgate rulemakings in a timely manner, leveraging various Federal training initiatives, and issuing airmen and operator certificates, among other responsibilities and authorities carried out by the Agency.

Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Advisory Committee

According to recent projections, there is strong demand for aircraft mechanics and service technicians with an estimated 11,500 job openings available annually from 2021 until 2031.⁴¹ To help meet this aviation maintenance need, and other workforce needs across the industry, section 403 establishes the Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Advisory Committee to advise the DOT and FAA on the recruitment, retention, education and training, and career advancement of women in the aviation industry. The Committee will consist of various aviation stakeholders, including aviation maintenance, repair and overhaul entities, and must submit reports to Congress on its progress, findings, and recommendations.⁴² On November 15, 2024, the DOT filed the charter to establish the Committee, and on November 21, 2024, DOT published a notice for solicitation of nominations for Committee members.⁴³

³⁸ Revise Airplane Definition to Incorporate Powered-lift Operations, RIN 2120-AL72, Unified Agenda, Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs; *FAA Reauthorization: Enhancing America’s Gold Standard in Aviation Safety, Hearing Before the Subcomm. on Aviation of the H. Comm. on Transp. and Infrastructure*, 118th Cong. (Feb. 7, 2023) (statement of David Boulter, Acting Assoc. Admin. for Aviation Safety, FAA).

³⁹ Press Release, FAA, *With New Rule, FAA is Ready for Air Travel of the Future*, (Oct. 22, 2024) available at <https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/new-rule-faa-ready-air-travel-future>.

⁴⁰ FAA, *ADVANCED AIR MOBILITY INFRASTRUCTURE*, (Oct. 15, 2024), available at https://www.faa.gov/airports/new_entrants/aam_infrastructure.

⁴¹ U.S. GOV’T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-23-106769, *AVIATION WORKFORCE: SUPPLY OF AIRLINE PILOTS AND AIRCRAFT MECHANICS*, (2023), available at <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-106769>.

⁴² FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118-63, § 403.

⁴³ FAA, *Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Advisory Committee Charter*, (Nov. 15, 2024), available at <https://www.faa.gov/regulationspolicies/rulemaking/committees/documents/bessie->

Airman Medical Certificate Modernization

Pilots must obtain and maintain an FAA medical certificate to operate aircraft, and for commercial pilots, it is a requirement for employment.⁴⁴ Section 411 establishes a working group to review the FAA's medical processes, policies, procedures, and make recommendations to the Administrator to ensure the timely and efficient certification of airmen. Among its tasks, this working group will assess the FAA's special issuance process, determine the appropriateness of the list of medical conditions under which an Air Medical Examiner (AME) can issue a medical certificate, and review mental health protocols and approved medications, including any actions taken resulting from recommendations by the Mental Health and Aviation Medical Clearances Aviation Rulemaking Committee.⁴⁵ This section establishes an aviation workforce mental health task group responsible for overseeing, monitoring, and evaluating the FAA's efforts to support the mental health of the aviation workforce. The FAA has established the aeromedical innovation and modernization working group, held its first meeting, and is on track to stand up the Mental Health Task Force consistent with the requirement in this section. It is expected that the FAA will respond to the working group's findings by taking necessary action to streamline the medical certification process and breakdown barriers for applicants.

Improving Safety-Critical Staffing at FAA

The FAA's Flight Standards Service (FSS) and Aircraft Certification Service (AIR) aviation safety inspectors are responsible for the certification, education, oversight, and enforcement of the NAS.⁴⁶ Given increased compliance requirements on manufacturers and operators, ongoing supply chain quality issues, enhanced scrutiny of safety culture across the aviation ecosystem, and the emergence of more advanced aerospace technologies in United States airspace, it is critical that this safety workforce be fully staffed to meet both present day and future industry demand. Sections 429, 430, and 431 collectively require a holistic review of FAA's safety critical workforce, including staffing for safety inspectors, to ensure the agency can efficiently and effectively fulfil its aviation safety mission.⁴⁷ Furthermore, section 428 directs the FAA to utilize its existing direct hire authorities to hire more individuals for positions related to aircraft certification and aviation safety, including in positions that support the safe integration of new airspace entrants.⁴⁸

Federal Aviation Workforce Development Programs

FAARA 2018 established the Aviation Workforce Development (AWD) Grants program to fund outreach and educational efforts focused on growing the United States aircraft pilot and aviation maintenance workforce. This program enjoys broad support from many aviation stakeholders, as it encourages collaboration between government, industry, and local entities to address skills gaps while encouraging more Americans to pursue good-paying careers in aviation.⁴⁹ Section 440 of FAARA 2024 not only builds on the successes of the AWD Grants program for the pilot and maintenance talent pools, but it also establishes a new eligibility for aviation manufacturing to ensure the manufacturing sector has a robust talent pool to recruit from in the coming decades. FAARA 2024 authorizes funding levels for the aviation maintenance, aircraft pilot, and aviation manufacturing development programs at \$20 million respectively for each of FY 2025 through 2028. This section also invests \$12 million annually in the new Willa Brown Aviation Education Program to expand outreach and aviation education opportunities in low-income and underrepresented communities.⁵⁰ The FAA has informed Committee staff that the adjustments to the AWD grant programs will be reflected in the next round of grants; a process which will start after Congress enacts its FY 2025 appropriations bill.

coleman-women-aviation-advisory. See also FAA, FAA Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Initiative, (Nov. 21, 2024), available at <https://www.faa.gov/women-in-aviation>.

⁴⁴ FAA, *Mental Health & Aviation Medical Clearances ARC Recommendation Report* (Apr. 1, 2024), available at https://www.faa.gov/sites/faa.gov/files/Mental_Health_ARC_Final_Report_RELEASED.pdf.

⁴⁵ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, § 411.

⁴⁶ *Strengthening the Aviation Workforce: Hearing Before the S. Comm. on Commerce, Space and Transportation*, 118th Cong. (Mar. 16, 2023) (statement of David Spero, National President, Professional Aviation Safety Specialists).

⁴⁷ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, §§ 429, 430, 431.

⁴⁸ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, § 428.

⁴⁹ Pub. L. No. 115–254 § 625, 132 Stat. 3405.

⁵⁰ FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Pub. Law No. 118–63, § 440.

IV. WITNESSES

- Jason Terreri, Executive Director, Syracuse Regional Airport Authority, on behalf of the Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA)
- Adam Woodworth, Chief Executive Officer, Wing
- Pete Bunce, President and Chief Executive Officer, General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA)
- Greg Regan, President, Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD)

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>§ 202. Assistant Administrator for Rule-making and Regulatory Improvement.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall appoint an Assistant Administrator for Rulemaking and Regulatory Improvement. (202(a))</p> <p>To FAA: Assistant Administrator for Rule-making and Regulatory Improvement shall brief the appropriate committees of Congress within 30 months of enactment. (202(b))</p>	<p>Effective upon enactment</p> <p>November 17, 2026</p>	<p>PENDING—FAA has informed the Committee of a need to reprogram funding to facilitate the creation of a standalone office.</p>
<p>§ 205. Regulatory Materials Improvement</p> <p>To FAA: Establish a process review team to provide the Administrator with recommendations to improve the promulgation of regulatory materials by the Agency. (205(a))</p>	<p>September 14, 2024</p>	<p>COMPLETED—FAA established the review team and is working towards developing and publishing an action plan.</p>
<p>§ 208. Application Dashboard and Feedback Portal.</p> <p>To FAA: The Deputy Administrator shall provide the Administrator a recommendation regarding the need for or benefits of a dashboard by which an applicant can track their application status. (208(b))</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall brief the appropriate committees of Congress after receiving a recommendation from the Deputy Administrator. (208(c))</p>	<p>November 17, 2026</p> <p>December 2026/January 2027</p>	<p>PENDING—FAA has time to work towards fulfilling this mandate.</p>
<p>§ 336. Consistent and timely pilot checks for air carriers.</p> <p>To FAA: Establish a working group for purposes of reviewing and evaluating all regulations and policies related to check airmen and authorized check airmen for air carrier operations conducted under part 135 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations. (336(a))</p>	<p>November 12, 2024</p>	<p>COMPLETED—FAA created the part 135 check pilot workgroup and added the group to the ACT ARC.</p>
<p>§ 347. Zero Tolerance for Near Misses, Runway Incursions, and Surface Safety Risks.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall establish a Runway Safety Council to develop a systematic management strategy to address airport surface safety risks. (347(b))</p>	<p>November 15, 2024</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—The Runway Safety Council has been established and is working to fulfill subsection (c), the identification of surface safety technologies.</p>

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024—Continued

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>§ 353. Ramp worker safety call to action.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall initiate a Call to Action safety review of airport ramp worker safety and ways to minimize or eliminate ingestion zone and jet blast zone accidents. (353(a))</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall submit a report to Congress on the review and any related recommendations. (353(c))</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall develop and publish training and related education materials about aircraft engine ingestion/jet blast hazards for ground crews. (353(d) and (f))</p>	<p>November 12, 2024</p> <p>180 days after the conclusion of the Call to Action safety review.</p> <p>6 months after the completion of the Call to Action safety review.</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—FAA has initiated the work on the Call to Action and finalized its scoping.</p>
<p>§ 355. Tower Marking Notice of Proposed Rulemaking</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall issue a notice of proposed rulemaking to implement section 2110 of the FAA Extension, Safety, and Security Act of 2016 (49 U.S.C. 44718 note).</p>	<p>May 17, 2025</p>	<p>COMPLETED—The FAA issued the tower marking NPRM in November.</p>
<p>§ 372. Enhanced Qualification Program for Restricted Airline Transport Pilot Certificate.</p> <p>To FAA: Within six months, the Administrator shall establish the requirements for a program to be known as the Enhanced Qualification Program.</p>	<p>November 16, 2024</p>	<p>DELAYED</p>
<p>§ 403. Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Advisory Committee.</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall establish the Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Advisory Committee. (403(a))</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall make appointments to the Committee. (403(e))</p>	<p>November 16, 2024</p> <p>February 16, 2025</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—The FAA filed the Committee charter and published in the Federal Register the Notice of Solicitation for Nominations for Appointment to the BCWA Advisory Committee. The FAA is on track to make appointments by February 2025.</p>
<p>§ 411. Aeromedical Innovation and Modernization Working Group.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall establish a working group to review the medical processes and policies and make recommendations to the Administrator on modernizing such processes and policies. (411(a))</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall also establish a task group to oversee, monitor, and evaluate the FAA's efforts to support the mental health of the aviation workforce. (411(d))</p> <p>To FAA: The working group shall submit a report to Congress on its findings and recommendations. (411(f))</p>	<p>November 12, 2024</p> <p>120 days after the establishment of the Aeromedical Innovation & Modernization working group.</p> <p>May 16, 2025, and annually thereafter.</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—The FAA established the working group which held its first meeting on November 13, 2024. The FAA is also on track to stand up the Mental Health Task Force.</p>

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024—Continued

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>§ 425. Joint Aviation Employment Training Working Group.</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall, in coordination with the Secretary of Defense, establish an interagency working group, to advise on increasing awareness of the eligibility, training, and experience requirements needed to become an FAA-certified or a military-covered aviation professional in order to improve career transitions between the military and civilian workforces.</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall submit to Congress an initial report on the activities of the working group; and submit subsequent reports to Congress annually thereafter.</p>	<p>September 13, 2024</p> <p>May 16, 2025</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—DOT has reached out to the DOD to coordinate this effort.</p>
<p>§ 428. Direct-Hire Authority Utilization.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall utilize direct hire authorities to hire individuals on a non-competitive basis for positions related to aircraft certification and aviation safety. (428(a))</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall brief the appropriate committees of Congress on the utilization of the direct-hire authorities. (428(b))</p>	<p>No deadline</p> <p>November 12, 2024</p>	<p>DELAYED—FAA has not briefed the Committee yet.</p>
<p>§ 430. Staffing Model for Aviation Safety Inspectors.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall review and, as necessary, revise the staffing model for aviation safety inspectors. (430(a))</p>	<p>May 16, 2026</p>	<p>PENDING—FAA has time to work towards fulfilling this mandate.</p>
<p>§ 431. Safety-Critical Staffing.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall take appropriate actions in response to the number of aviation safety inspectors, aviation safety technicians, and operation support positions that are identified in the staffing model to meet the responsibilities of the Flight Standards Service and Aircraft Certification Service each fiscal year so long as such staffing increases are measured relative to the number of individuals serving in safety-critical positions as of September 30, 2023. (431(a))</p>	<p>Due upon completion of the staffing model review in § 430</p>	<p>PENDING—FAA has 2 years from date of enactment to complete section 430, so there is ample time for the agency to complete section 431.</p>
<p>§ 437. Air Traffic Control Workforce Staffing.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall set, as the minimum hiring target for new air traffic controllers, the maximum number of individuals able to be trained at the FAA Academy. (437(a))</p>	<p>Effective upon enactment</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—FAA entered into an agreement with the National Academies TRB in June. The FAA anticipates the TRB will submit its report in the spring or summer of 2025.</p>

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024—Continued

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>To FAA: Administrator shall submit an attestation to the appropriate committees of Congress demonstrating an agreement entered into with the National Academies Transportation Research Board (TRB). (437(b))</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall take such action that may be necessary to implement and use the staffing model identified by the TRB, including any recommendations for improving such model. The Administrator must brief Congress on the revised staffing model. (437(c))</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator is directed, in the interim, to adopt and utilize the staffing models and methodologies developed by the CRWG that were recommended in a report submitted to the FAA and referenced in the 2023 Controller Workforce Plan. (437(e))</p>	<p>June 15, 2024</p> <p>May 16, 2025. FAA to then brief Congress on revised staffing model 90 days after implementation.</p> <p>As the TRB conducts the study and prior to the required implementation of revised air traffic controller staffing standards.</p>	
<p>§ 439. FAA Academy and Facility Expansion Plan.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall initiate the development of a plan to expand the overall capacity of its facilities, instruction, equipment, and training resources to grow the number of developmental air traffic controllers enrolled per fiscal year and support increases in FAA air controller staffing to advance the safety of the national airspace system. (439(a))</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall submit to Congress the plan. (439(b))</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall brief Congress on the implementation of the plan. (439(c))</p>	<p>August 14, 2024</p> <p>May 16, 2025</p> <p>180 days after the submission of the plan to Congress.</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—FAA began developing the plan in August.</p>
<p>§ 440. Improving Federal Aviation Workforce Development Programs.</p> <p>To DOT: Establish a program to provide grants for eligible projects to support the education and recruitment of aviation manufacturing technical workers and aerospace engineers and the development of the aviation manufacturing workforce.</p>	<p>No deadline</p>	<p>PENDING—Provision is effective upon enactment, subject to appropriations and DOT/FAA establishing the new manufacturing program.</p>
<p>§ 511. Bureau of Transportation Statistics.</p> <p>To DOT: Initiate a rulemaking to revise section 234.4 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, to create a new “cause of delay” category that identifies and tracks information on delays and cancellations of air carriers that are due to instructions from the FAA Air Traffic Control System. (511(a))</p>	<p>July 15, 2024</p>	<p>DELAYED</p>

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024—Continued

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>§ 517. Passenger Experience Advisory Committee.</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall establish an advisory committee to advise the Secretary and the Administrator in carrying out activities related to the improvement of the passenger experience in air transportation customer service. (517(a))</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall submit a report to Congress on consensus recommendations made by the advisory committee. (517(g))</p>	<p>No deadline</p> <p>May 16, 2025</p>	<p>PENDING—DOT has not established the advisory committee.</p>
<p>§ 519. Seat Dimensions.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall either initiate a rulemaking on minimum dimensions for passenger seat sizes or make a determination that a rulemaking is not necessary. In the event of the latter, the FAA shall brief the appropriate committees of Congress on the justification of such decision.</p>	<p>July 15, 2024</p>	<p>COMPLETED—FAA briefed the Committee in July. According to the FAA, the agency determined that additional regulations on seat dimensions are not necessary for the safety of passengers. However, FAA plans to study improvements to the safety and efficiency of evacuation standards, as well as conduct an ARC, pursuant to section 365 of the law.</p>
<p>§ 546. Accommodations for Qualified Individuals with Disabilities.</p> <p>To DOT: The Secretary shall issue an advanced notice of proposed rulemaking regarding seating accommodations for any qualified individual with a disability. (546(a))</p> <p>To DOT: The Secretary shall issue a final rule pursuant to the rulemaking in this section. (546(a))</p>	<p>November 12, 2024</p> <p>May 16, 2028</p>	<p>DELAYED—DOT has not issued the ANPRM.</p>
<p>§ 619. NextGen Programs.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall convene FAA officials to evaluate and expedite implementation of NextGen programs and capabilities. (619(a))</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall develop an action plan to utilize performance-based navigation (PBN) procedures as a primary means of navigation to reduce dependency on legacy systems within the NAS. (619(b))</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall develop a 2-year implementation plan to further incentivize the acceleration of the equipage rates of certain NextGen avionics within the fleets of air carriers. (619(g))</p>	<p>November 12, 2024</p> <p>November 12, 2024</p> <p>July 16, 2025</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—FAA officials have started program evaluation and planning for the deadlines contained in this section.</p>

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024—Continued

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>§ 622. Audit of Legacy Systems.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall initiate and complete an audit of all legacy systems of the NAS to determine the level of operational risk, functionality, security, and compatibility with current and future technology. (622(a))</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall provide a report to the appropriate committees of Congress on the findings and recommendations of the audit. (622(d))</p>	<p>August 16, 2024</p> <p>February 12, 2026</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—FAA initiated an audit of legacy systems in September and is working towards completing the audit and reporting to Congress.</p>
<p>§ 745. Electric Aircraft Infrastructure Pilot Program.</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary may establish a five-year pilot program allowing up to 10 eligible airports to acquire, install, and operate charging equipment for electric aircraft and to construct or modify related infrastructure to support such equipment. (745(a))</p>	<p>No deadline, however, the pilot program would expire in October 2028.</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—The FAA intends to stand up the pilot program in FY2025.</p>
<p>§ 767. PFAS-Related Resources for Airports.</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall, in consultation with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), establish a reimbursement program, to replace aqueous film forming foam (AFFF) and related firefighting equipment with non-fluorinated firefighting agents.</p>	<p>August 14, 2024</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS/DELAYED—FAA is finalizing a programmatic framework to establish the program.</p>
<p>§ 783. Expedited Environmental Review and One Federal Decision.</p> <p>To DOT: Any airport capacity enhancement project, terminal development project, or general aviation airport construction or improvement project shall be subject to the coordinated and expedited environmental review process requirements of this section. (783)</p>	<p>Effective upon enactment</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS</p>
<p>§ 786. Part 150 Noise Standards Updates.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall review and revise, as appropriate, federal airport noise regulations under Part 150 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall brief Congress regarding the review.</p>	<p>May 16, 2025</p> <p>August 14, 2024</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS/ANTICIPATED DELAY—The FAA briefed the Committee in August stating that the agency anticipates the regulatory update will be delayed until after the Aircraft Noise Advisory Committee (sec. 792) is established and has an opportunity to review the update.</p>
<p>§ 788. Categorical Exclusions.</p> <p>To FAA: Increases the number of FAA activities that are presumed to be covered by categorical exclusions for purposes of compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA). (788)</p>	<p>No deadline</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS</p>

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024—Continued

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>§ 815. BasicMed for Examiners Administering Tests or Proficiency Checks.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall issue a final rule to update part 61 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations to allow an examiner to administer a practical test or proficiency check if the examiner meets the medical qualifications requirements under part 68 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations. (815(b))</p>	May 16, 2027	COMPLETED—FAA promulgated revised rules to enact changes to BasicMed in November 2024.
<p>§ 827. EAGLE Initiative.</p> <p>To FAA: Administrator shall continue to partner with industry and other Federal Government stakeholders in carrying out the EAGLE initiative through the end of 2030. (827(a))</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall submit to the appropriate committees of Congress a report that contains an updated strategic plan, describes the structure and involvement of all FAA offices, and identifies policy initiatives needed to improve and enhance timely and safe transition to unleaded aviation gasoline for the piston-engine aircraft fleet. (827(a))</p>	No deadline May 16, 2025	IN PROGRESS—The FAA began partnering with industry through the EAGLE initiative in 2022.
<p>§ 828. Expansion of BasicMed.</p> <p>To FAA: Update regulations to reflect the changes to BasicMed made by the section. (828(b))</p>	November 12, 2024	COMPLETED—FAA promulgated revised rules to enact changes to BasicMed in November 2024.
<p>§ 833. National Coordination and Oversight of Designated Pilot Examiners.</p> <p>To FAA: Establish an office to provide oversight and facilitate national coordination of designated pilot examiners (DPE's). (833(a))</p>	No deadline	IN PROGRESS
<p>§ 930. Beyond Visual of Line of Sight Operations for Unmanned Aircraft Systems.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall issue a notice of proposed rulemaking establishing a performance-based regulatory pathway for UAS to operate beyond-visual-line-of-sight. (930(a))</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall issue a final rule based on the proposed rule under this section. (930(a))</p>	September 16, 2024 Not later than 16 months after publishing the NPRM	IN PROGRESS—DELAYED Proposed rule is awaiting OMB final approval. FAA anticipates release of the proposed rule no later than January 2025 as reflected in the Spring 2024 Unified Agenda.

Key Provisions in FAARA 2024—Continued

Mandate	Statutory Deadline	Status
<p>§ 933. Special Authority for Transport of Hazardous Materials by Commercial Package Delivery Unmanned Aircraft Systems.</p> <p>To DOT: The Secretary shall hold a public meeting to obtain input on changes necessary to implement this section. (933(e))</p> <p>To DOT: Secretary shall use a risk-based approach to establish the operational requirements, standards, or special permits necessary to approve or authorize an air carrier to transport hazardous materials by UAS. (933(a))</p>	<p>November 12, 2024</p> <p>November 12, 2024</p>	<p>IN PROGRESS—A public meeting was held in August to obtain input on changes necessary to implement this section.</p>
<p>§ 955. Rules for Operation of Powered-Lift Aircraft.</p> <p>To FAA: The Administrator shall publish a final rule for the Special Federal Aviation Regulation of the FAA titled “Integration of Powered-Lift: Pilot Certification and Operations; Miscellaneous Amendments Related to Rotorcraft and Airplanes” establishing procedures for certifying pilots of powered-lift aircraft and providing operational rules for powered-lift aircraft capable of transporting passengers and cargo. (955(a))</p>	<p>December 16, 2024</p>	<p>COMPLETED—FAA published the final rule in October 2024.</p>

FAA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON IMPLEMENTATION

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 11, 2024

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION,
COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE,
Washington, DC.

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 10:02 a.m., in room 2167 Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Garret Graves (Chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. The subcommittee will come to order. I ask unanimous consent the chair be authorized to declare a recess at any time during today's hearing. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. COHEN. I also ask unanimous consent that Members not on the subcommittee be permitted to sit with the subcommittee at today's hearing and ask questions. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Without objection, without objection, so ordered. As a reminder, if Members wish to insert documents into the record, please also email them to DocumentsTI@mail.house.gov.

I now recognize myself for the purposes of an opening statement for 5 minutes.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. GARRET GRAVES OF LOUISIANA, CHAIRMAN, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. I want to thank the witnesses for being here today, and I want to thank all the Members for the extraordinary work that was done in this Congress on the FAA reauthorization bill. Like everyone here can talk about things that were frustrating and problems this Congress. I certainly have my robust list of items, but when I think back to some of the top five accomplishments, this bill is in the top five. This was something that in my opinion, really demonstrates how this place is supposed to work and especially how this committee is supposed to work, and I want to give a big shout out to Chairman Sam Graves—the last time I get to do this: my father—and to Ranking Member Larsen and my good friend Steve Cohen, because this was a complicated process.

As Hunter and the entire team will tell you, well over 2,000 submissions from stakeholders from Members of Congress making requests for identifying problems in the aviation space. Over 2,000. This bill addressed the far majority of those. This legislation, de-

spite the dysfunctional, polarized, divisive Congress that we have, this bill passed the House of Representatives—let me start. It passed out of this committee unanimously. It passed out of the House of Representatives by a vote of 351 to 69, and ultimately the conference report, and passed out of the House of Representatives by a vote of 387 to only 26 confused or otherwise misunderstood folks. And so, I mean, that is huge in this polarized environment. I will say it again, 387 to 26, which really was amazing.

Look, when we started this, when we started this even before we knew who was going to be in the majority, it was an agreement among all that we were going to do this on a bipartisan basis, and we were going to do this in an agreement that made sure that we addressed the key issues in aviation, and we are really excited about the progress that has been made.

I want to remind you, people said the margins are too narrow, you are not going to get a bill, you will never make it bipartisan. How many extensions, or how many years of extensions will we be looking at before we actually do a bill? And the other thing is, with the amazing pace of innovation based upon a lot of the folks that you are representing here today, the amazing pace of innovation, there was so much stuff that needed to be done, and folks said that you will never be able to address all the needs in this bill, so, we got it right. At least 90-plus percent right. We are really excited.

But having it in the law is only the first step in the process. The next thing is actually having the FAA abide by the law, having the FAA stick with the deadlines and timelines and the priorities that we have identified in this legislation, because all of us here can tell stories about the FAA, about the Corps of Engineers, about FEMA, and many other agencies that completely ignore the laws or write it in ways that are not consistent with congressional intent. So, that is absolutely critical, and that is why we are having this hearing today.

This is my final hearing as Aviation Subcommittee chair, and I want to emphasize some points about the implementation to be able to help Members who carry forward in the 119th Congress and beyond.

First of all, it is critical for implementation of the law and for American leadership in aviation, the FAA better step up and lead on the integration of new aviation technologies. Our aviation leadership in the past is no guarantee of leadership in the future, and too often, FAA spends too much time looking for every reason to say no when it has every reason to actually say yes.

Other countries sense weakness right now, and they are circling like vultures to permanently shut this country out from the next golden era of aviation. Our bill provides a roadmap to respond to this challenge, but unless the FAA starts the car, a roadmap is just that: a roadmap.

Second, we have to center on average Americans, the passenger, and their experience in everything this subcommittee does. I talk about this at every hearing, and I am going to keep doing it, because I think, oftentimes, we silo or look at only different components of the passenger experience. It may be the parking lot; it may be checking in bags; it may be the TSA experience; it may be going through concessions; it may be the experience at the gate; it

may be what they are getting on the app in terms of air traffic control information; it may be their experience on the plane.

My good friend, Mr. Cohen, likes to talk about seats all the time. It may be on the back end in baggage claim. No one is looking at that comprehensive experience, and we have got to do a better job, because that is our job in Congress is looking at that common experience, the common process, and that passenger experience to make sure that it is actually sewn together in a way that makes sense. I think that is absolutely critical. Things like air traffic control, having the best data, the best technology. Procurement and acquisition has been a massive problem.

And finally, this subcommittee and stakeholders also need to hold the FAA accountable for actually implementing the law, or the accomplishment this year will simply evaporate. I have made no secret of my frustrations with the FAA missing deadlines and having failed to complete mandates from 2018, or even the 2016 FAA laws, and that can't happen again. If history is any guide, the FAA will resist any uncomfortable change, no matter how necessary, without robust oversight from the subcommittee and call outs from the industry.

We finished all of our victory laps of getting the bill passed. Now it is time to make sure that the FAA is implementing the bill in accordance with the letter of the law and congressional intent.

So, I want to say again, huge thanks. Sorry for going over time. Huge thanks to Chairman Sam Graves. Sam, thank you for trusting me with this absolutely important or critical subcommittee. Thank you for the mentorship. There is not a chairman of the Transportation Committee in the history of this Congress, probably in the future of this Congress, that is going to have the aviation experience or knowledge as Chairman Sam Graves.

I want to give a huge shout-out to some of the wise and passionate staff directors: Holly Woodruff Lyons, and, of course, Hunter. The team, Laney Copeland, Julie Devine, Chris Senn, Andrew Giacini, Will Moore, Corey Sites, and Jamie Hopkins. T&I Comms Director Justin Harclerode. Justin, thanks. I know that I rarely read things, and it makes it a pain in the rear to do the statements, so, thanks to you for your efforts there to try and put words to my diatribes.

And lastly, to our witnesses for being here today. Tell us where the FAA is doing well, where they have already managed to fall behind and helping to identify priorities and triage in moving forward. Ensuring that the FAA is able to carry through on the promise the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 will be a full-time job, but I have no doubt the subcommittee will rise to the challenge and continue to do great things.

[Mr. Graves of Louisiana's prepared statement follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Garret Graves of Louisiana, Chairman,
Subcommittee on Aviation**

I want to start off by thanking all the witnesses here today and our members for the extraordinary work that was done by this subcommittee this Congress, and specifically on the FAA Reauthorization Act. It is one of the greatest achievements of the 118th Congress and demonstrates how this place is supposed to work. Big shout out to Chairman Sam Graves, Ranking Member Rick Larsen, and my good friend, Subcommittee Ranking Member Steve Cohen.

Our original legislation passed the House of Representatives by a vote of 351 to 69, and the final product we worked on with the Senate passed 387 to 26. When we started this, there was an agreement among all four corners that we would pursue this effort in a bipartisan way. Our detractors told us, things like: "The margins are too narrow, you can never make it bipartisan," "How many years of extensions should we expect?" or "There's too much to do, you'll never be able to address all the needs." But we got to work anyway, and we were successful.

But, having it written in law is only the first step. The next thing is actually having the FAA abide by the law, and have the FAA stick with the timelines and deadlines we have identified in this legislation because all of us here can tell stories about the FAA, the Corps of Engineers, FEMA, and many other agencies that completely ignore the laws or implement them in ways that are not in line with the way Congress intended. That's why it is critical and why we are having this hearing today.

This is my final hearing as Subcommittee Chair, and I want to emphasize some points on implementation of the bill that I hope members will carry forward into the 119th Congress and beyond.

First off, it's critical for American leadership and aviation and FAA to better step up and lead on the integration of new aviation technology. Our aviation leadership in the past is no guarantee of our leadership in the future. And too often the FAA spends too much time looking for every reason to say "no" when it actually has every reason to say "yes." Other countries sense a weakness right now; they are circling like vultures to permanently shut this country out of a golden era of aviation. Our bill provides a road map to respond to this challenge, but unless the FAA starts the car, a road map is only that: a road map.

Second, we have to put average Americans, the passengers, and their experience interacting with the aviation system at the heart of everything this subcommittee does. I talk about this at every hearing, and I will continue to do so because often I think we silo or look at only different components of the passenger experience instead of the comprehensive process. That means shining a light on the failures in acquisition, procurement, implementation, and operations of air traffic control technologies which cause so many delays and inefficiencies in the National Airspace System.

Finally, the entire Committee and our stakeholders need to hold the FAA accountable for actually implementing the law, or the accomplishments we have made will simply evaporate. I have made no secret about my frustration with the FAA for missing deadlines and failing to complete mandates for the 2018 or 2016 laws. If history is any guide, the FAA will try to resist any uncomfortable change, no matter how necessary, without robust oversight from this subcommittee and callouts from industry. We finished our victory laps in getting the bill passed; now it's time to make sure the FAA is implementing the bill in a way that is in accordance with the letter of the law and congressional intent.

I want to say again huge thanks to Chairman Sam Graves for trusting me with this extremely important and critical subcommittee. Thank you for your mentorship. There is not a chairman in the history of this Congress or most likely the future of this Congress that has the aviation experience or knowledge of Sam Graves. I want to give a huge shout out to my wise and passionate staff directors, Holly Woodruff Lyons and Hunter Presti, and to our team: Maggie Ayrea, Laney Copeland Allen, Will Moore, Chris Senn, Andrew Giacini, Julie Devine, Corey Sites, Jamie Hopkins, and the Committee's Communications Director, Justin Harclerode.

Lastly, thank you to our witnesses for being here to tell us where the FAA is doing well and where they are already falling behind to help identify priorities moving forward to ensure the FAA can carry through on the promise of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. That will be a full time job for this subcommittee that I have no doubt will rise to the occasion and continue to do the right thing.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. I now recognize my great friend, Steve Cohen, for 5 minutes.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. STEVE COHEN OF TENNESSEE,
RANKING MEMBER, SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION**

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair. And it has been an honor to serve alongside you here on this subcommittee the past 2 years. It has been the most important subcommittee I have served on in my 18 years in Congress. And working with you has allowed us to work together in a bipartisan fashion along with Mr. Graves and my ranking member, my leader, Mr. Larsen, in getting this bill passed. Your leadership on this committee has been phenomenal, and when they go back, in my opinion, and they look at Louisiana, they will think of Billy Cannon, Harry Connick, the Mannings, and Mr. Graves.

While the 118th Congress is on track to become one of the least productive in U.S. history, that is not the case of this committee, where earlier this year, we passed, with overwhelmingly bipartisan support, the long-time and long-term FAA reauthorization bill. It has been over 6 months since the FAA reauthorization was signed into law, and it's time to ensure compliance with the instructions contained therein.

The bill aimed to address numerous challenges facing our aviation system, and these include the modernization of safety and technology infrastructure; the integration of new entrants into U.S. skies, including drones that are called airplanes; the shortage of air traffic controllers; and the poor treatment of airline passengers, especially passengers with disabilities.

Our witnesses today come from across the aviation sector, and they will provide valuable insights into the status of various provisions of the law. One provision particularly important to me, other than seat sizes, is to implement the overdue NTSB recommendation requiring airplanes flying long overwater routes to have better black box technology, which will allow investigators to recover flight data and cockpit recordings without the need to search the ocean floor.

Two technologies can make this possible. One is data streaming through satellites, which sends black box data in real time. The other is deployable flight data recorder, which float on the water after a crash. A major aircraft manufacturer is already using this technology, making it much faster and easier for investigators to access the critical information. With the advanced technology available today, it is a no-brainer, so, we are happy it is now law.

The committee has taken great strides to improve transparency for the flying public and ensure our safety investigators have the information needed to prevent accidents. It is important to me this provision is implemented adequately.

As we begin our 119th Congress next—which we will in January, this subcommittee will conduct ongoing oversight of the FAA, and we hope that if there is a change in Administrators at the FAA, it will be somebody who has intimate knowledge of this bill and is able to implement it and work well with this committee.

We look forward to ensuring full compliance with the law. We will also work to provide the resources necessary for the FAA to carry out its statutory authority and to enact any additional legislation necessary to ensure the safety and efficiency of our Nation's airspace.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today. Thank you, Mr. Graves, for your service and your friendship, and I look forward to our discussion.

[Mr. Cohen's prepared statement follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Steve Cohen of Tennessee, Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Aviation**

Thank you, Chairman Graves. It's been an honor to serve alongside you on this Subcommittee these past two years. Your leadership both on this committee and in Congress will surely be missed.

While the 118th Congress is on track to become one of the least productive in U.S. history, that is not the case in this Committee, where earlier this year we passed an overwhelmingly bipartisan, long-term FAA reauthorization bill.

It has now been over six months since FAA reauthorization was signed into law, so it is time to ensure the law is being expeditiously implemented.

The bill aimed to address numerous challenges facing our aviation system.

These include the modernization of safety and technology infrastructure, the integration of new entrants into U.S. skies, the shortage of air traffic controllers, and the poor treatment of airline passengers, especially passengers with disabilities.

Our witnesses today come from across the aviation sector, and they will provide valuable insights into the status of various provisions in the law.

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We will also work to provide the resources necessary for the FAA to carry out its statutory authority and to enact any additional legislation necessary to ensure the safety and efficiency of our nation's airspace.

Thank you to our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to our discussion.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you, Mr. Cohen.

I recognize full committee Chairman Sam Graves for 5 minutes.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SAM GRAVES OF MISSOURI,
CHAIRMAN, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRA-
STRUCTURE**

Mr. GRAVES OF MISSOURI. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

It is imperative that we conduct rigorous oversight of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 to ensure that the FAA follows the letter of the law and is held accountable for meeting key deadlines that Congress has set, and I look forward to hearing from each of our witnesses. Thank you all for being here. I look forward to hearing your perspective on the FAA's efforts to implement the new aviation law as we work together to advance American aviation.

Everyone here knows that I can spend more than my share of time identifying late provisions and talking at length about how

the FAA should do its job, but I want to use my time to recognize that today is my colleague, Chairman Garret Graves, this is his last hearing at the committee.

Garret's work on the committee, especially his leadership in helping craft the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, has solidified his legacy as a staunch advocate for aviation. Over this Congress, he has worked to advance solutions that propel new technologies, improve the passenger experience for all travelers, and bolster the aviation workforce.

Anyone who knows or works with Garret and his team to push a bill forward knows that Garret gives it everything that he has, and then some, to get the job done. His efforts were instrumental in getting this bill over the finish line, and I am grateful for his partnership and his friendship over the years.

Garret, thank you for your work on the committee and the subcommittee, and I look forward to seeing what you do next. And with that, I'll yield back.

[Mr. Graves of Missouri's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Sam Graves of Missouri, Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

It is imperative that we conduct rigorous oversight of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 to ensure the FAA follows the letter of the law and is held accountable for meeting the key deadlines Congress set.

I look forward to hearing from each of our witnesses on their perspective of the FAA's efforts to implement the new aviation law, as we work together to advance American aviation.

Everyone here knows I could spend more than my fair share of time identifying late provisions and talking at lengths about how FAA should do its job, but I want to use my time to recognize that today is my colleague's, Chairman Garret Graves', last hearing at the Committee.

Garret's work on this committee, especially his leadership in helping craft the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, has solidified his legacy as a staunch advocate for aviation. Over this Congress, he has worked to advance solutions that propel new technologies, improve the passenger experience for all travelers, and bolster the aviation workforce.

Anyone who works with Garret and his team to push a bill forward knows that Garret gives it his all and then some to get the job done. His efforts were instrumental in getting this bill over the finish line, and I am grateful for his partnership and friendship over the years.

Garret, thank you for your work on the Committee and Subcommittee, and I look forward to seeing what you do next.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Me, too. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I now recognize the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. Larsen, for 5 minutes.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. RICK LARSEN OF WASHINGTON, RANKING MEMBER, COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I, like many of us, am disappointed that the cameras in the hallway were not here to cover Garret Graves' last hearing. However, it is good that we are all here to be here and honor him, though, for his work in this committee, but also in the House as a whole, and also for his personal friendship and our getting to know each

other over the fact that I represented his in-laws for some time, and a lot of his family members in my district as well.

But I want to thank you for calling the hearing today, the implementation of the 2024 FAA law.

In response to these challenges that aviation faces over the last few years, Congress did rise to the occasion. This committee engaged in a thorough process. We negotiated and compromised to reach a bipartisan and bicameral solution to deliver for the flying public.

I want to thank today's witnesses as well for providing critical input during that time as we worked through this process, from the bill's introduction to the final passage. Now, whether supporting the integration of new entrants in the airspace or overseeing the FAA's commitment to a safer and more efficient national airspace, your enthusiasm, Garret, your expertise, and your partnership will be missed. We will all miss that. So, I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

The passage of the 2024 FAA reauthorization was only the first step in ensuring the U.S. remains the gold standard in aviation safety, efficiency, and innovation. For instance, the law will increase the safety and efficiency of our airspace and help prevent close-calls and near-misses on airport runways across the country.

An FAA NAS Safety Review Team report on this found that air traffic controller staff shortages actively erode the margin of safety in the national airspace. To address these workforce and safety concerns, the law includes several provisions, including the FAA do several things, including hiring the maximum number of controllers annually, improving its controller staffing model, and expanding the deployment of surface surveillance and detection equipment at U.S. airports.

The law also calls on the FAA to take decisive actions to address aging FAA air traffic control legacy systems.

These crucial reforms will ultimately enhance the long-term efficiency and safety of our national airspace while creating good-paying aviation jobs.

Passenger safety also depends on worker safety, and as we emerged from the pandemic and air travel demand surged, there were an alarming number of unruly passenger incidents endangering flightcrews and passengers alike. So, to address this threat, the law created a task force to prevent such assaults and mandated airlines to establish employee assault and response plans.

Meanwhile, recent flight disruptions have shaken the flying public's confidence in air travel. For example, earlier this year, certain air carriers were unable to cope with the global IT outage, leaving thousands of passengers stranded.

To get us back on the right trajectory, the law requires airlines to provide full cash refunds to consumers affected by delayed or canceled flights and develop policies addressing reimbursement for passengers for hotel and meal costs when a flight is canceled or significantly delayed.

So, while reimbursing passengers affected by flight disruptions is one way to protect consumers, we have to do more to ensure every passenger can travel safely and with dignity. The FAA reauthorization improves training for airline personnel and contractors to bet-

ter assist travelers with disabilities and directs the DOT to create a roadmap for airlines to reduce damage to wheelchairs and mobility aids.

The law also increases funding for the Airport Improvement Program from \$3.35 to \$4 billion annually, of which at least \$150 million in discretionary funds, the largest portion that's ever been required before, are to be spent on airport climate, noise, and other environmental impacts.

Moreover, AIP funding can now be used to invest in infrastructure for alternative propulsion technologies, by allowing airports to fund the development of hydrogen and electrification infrastructure necessary to support new aircraft.

Finally, the law improves the lives of neighboring airport communities by requiring the FAA to develop a plan to transition away from leaded fuel in general aviation by 2030 and takes actions to mitigate the impacts of aviation noise across the country.

Lastly, I want to talk about the talent pool, because the FAA reauthorization made robust investments in the American aviation workforce, providing resources to expand and strengthen the talent pool—a requirement for American innovation. For instance, the law invests \$60 million annually in aviation workforce development grants to grow the next generation of aviation manufacturers, manufacturing workers, maintenance technicians, and pilots.

The current and future challenges facing the U.S. aviation system are significant, but not insurmountable, and I believe together we can meet these challenges. Congress did its job in passing the 2024 FAA reauthorization this past May. Now the FAA and the DOT need to do their jobs to effectively implement the programs and fulfill the various provisions.

I would note, again, I want to emphasize something that the chair said. Our vote here in the House was 387 to 26 and the Senate was 88–4. We know where those 30 people live, but we also know this: a strong bipartisan, bicameral support for the FAA reauthorization. The FAA and the DOT know the job it needs to do because Congress told the FAA and the DOT the job that it needs to do over the next several years.

As the new administration comes on board, we want to both help the administration move forward on the work that we assign to the DOT and the FAA to do this, and we can all be successful in doing that and help the administration to do that, because they already have clear direction on what it needs to do.

So, with that, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses about implementation, and again, I will thank my good friend, Garret Graves, for his service here at the committee and to the House. Thanks, Garret.

[Mr. Larsen of Washington's prepared statement follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Rick Larsen of Washington, Ranking Member,
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**

Thank you, Chairman Graves, for calling the hearing today on the implementation of the 2024 FAA law.

In response to these challenges that aviation faces over the last few years, Congress did rise to the occasion.

This Committee engaged in a thorough process, where we negotiated and compromised to reach a bipartisan, bicameral solution to deliver for the flying public.

I want to thank today's witnesses as well for providing critical input to the T&I Committee during that time as we worked through this process, from the bill's introduction to final passage.

Whether supporting the integration of new entrants in the airspace or overseeing the FAA's commitment to a safer and more efficient national airspace, your enthusiasm, Chairman Graves, your expertise and your partnership will be missed. We will all miss that.

I wish you the best of luck in your future endeavors.

The passage of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization was only the first step in ensuring that the United States remains the gold standard in aviation safety, efficiency, and innovation.

For instance, the law will increase the safety and efficiency of our airspace and help prevent the close calls and near misses on airport runways across the country.

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To address these workforce and safety concerns, the law includes several provisions directing the FAA to hire the maximum number of controllers annually, improve its controller staffing model and expand the deployment of surface surveillance and detection equipment at U.S. airports.

The law also calls on the FAA to take decisive actions to address aging FAA air traffic control legacy systems.

These crucial reforms will ultimately enhance the long-term efficiency and safety of our national airspace system while creating good-paying aviation jobs.

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To address this threat, the law created a task force to prevent such assaults and mandated airlines to establish employee assault and response plans.

Meanwhile, recent flight disruptions have shaken the flying public's confidence in air travel.

For example, earlier this year, certain air carriers were unable to cope with a global IT outage, leaving thousands of passengers stranded.

To get us back on the right trajectory, the law requires airlines to provide full cash refunds to consumers affected by delayed or canceled flights and develop policies addressing reimbursement for passengers for hotel and meal costs when a flight is canceled or significantly delayed.

While reimbursing passengers affected by flight disruptions is one way to protect consumers, we have to do more to ensure every passenger can travel safely and with dignity.

The FAA reauthorization improves training for airline personnel and contractors to better assist travelers with disabilities and directs the DOT to create a roadmap for airlines to reduce damage to wheelchairs and mobility aids.

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I believe, together, we all can meet these challenges.

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Now we must ensure the FAA and DOT do their jobs by effectively implementing the programs and fulfilling the various provisions.

I would note, and I want to emphasize what the Chair said, our vote here in the House was 387–26 and the Senate was 88–4. We know that there was strong bipartisan, bicameral support for the FAA Reauthorization. The FAA and the DOT knows the job it needs to do because Congress told the FAA and the DOT the job it needs to do over the next several years. As the new administration comes on board, we want to help the administration move forward on the work that we assigned to the DOT and the FAA so we can all be successful in doing the work on which Congress provided clear direction.

I look forward to hearing from today's witnesses regarding the FAA and DOT's progress on implementation of the 2024 FAA reauthorization law.

Thank you.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you, Ranking Member Larsen.

I recognize Ranking Member Cohen for a unanimous consent request.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, sir. First, I would like to welcome our witnesses. Thank them for being here today to help us with this. And I would like to take a moment to explain our lighting system. The first light is green. It has nothing to do with any New Deal or anything. It means you are on. Yellow doesn't mean to be chicken. It means you are running out of time, which may be chickening out before you get the red light where you get the buzzer.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. We wrote you a script. We wrote you a script.

Mr. COHEN. I am like you. I ad-libbed.

[Laughter.]

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent that I be allowed to ad-lib and that the witnesses' full statements be included in the record.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Without objection.

Mr. COHEN. Mr. Chairman, I also ask unanimous consent that the record of today's hearing remain open until such time as our witnesses have provided answers to any questions that may be submitted to them in writing.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. COHEN. I also ask unanimous consent that the record remain open for 15 days for any additional comments and information submitted by Members or witnesses to be included in the record of today's hearing.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Without objection, so ordered.

Mr. COHEN. As your written testimony has been made part of the record, the subcommittee asks that you limit your oral remarks to 5 minutes. Red light, 5 minutes. Thank you.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you, Mr. Cohen. I ask unanimous consent to enter statements from AUVSI/CDA and Reliable Robotics in the record. Without objection, so ordered.

[The information follows:]



Statement of Michael Robbins, President and Chief Executive Officer, Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International, and Lisa Ellman, Executive Director, Commercial Drone Alliance, Submitted for the Record by Hon. Garret Graves

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Chairman Graves, and Ranking Member Cohen,

The Commercial Drone Alliance (“CDA”)¹ and the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (“AUVSI”)² and our respective memberships thank you for holding this important hearing and appreciate the opportunity to provide our thoughts on the implementation of critical provisions of the Federal Aviation Administration (“FAA”) Reauthorization Act of 2024 (P.L. 118–63). While we and our members are focused on many key provisions in P.L. 118–63 that must be implemented in a timely manner, this Statement for the Record focuses on the mandates included in Section 930 of the legislation, which calls for the FAA Administrator to expeditiously release the Beyond Visual Line-of-Sight (“BVLOS”) Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (“NPRM”) and final rule, with firm deadlines. We also very much appreciate the recent bipartisan letter sent by numerous members of the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee to the executive branch on this very topic.³

Our understanding is that the FAA generated the BVLOS NPRM but progress stalled in the Office of the Secretary at the Department of Transportation (“DOT”) when the FAA sent the NPRM upward for review. The NPRM was held at DOT, without explanation, for ninety-plus days. This delay consequently delayed the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs’ (“OIRA”) interagency review process, as well. Unless urgent action is taken now to issue the BVLOS NPRM to initiate a public comment period, the result could be an indeterminate delay of the rule-making process as the presidential transition takes effect—harming the American drone industry and our global leadership in advanced aviation.

Over the last several weeks, our organizations and our combined memberships have held a series of EO 12866 meetings with OIRA on the BVLOS NPRM. Importantly, OIRA invited key officials from FAA, DOT, and agencies within the Executive Office of the President (“EOP”) to attend these meetings. During those meetings, we stressed the importance of the draft safety rule moving forward before the change in administration to keep progress going, and the significant economic impact of a BVLOS rule for all Americans.

In addition to a joint AUVSI/CDA leadership meeting, we convened industry experts from our combined memberships across six different sector-specific groups:

1. Public Safety/Law Enforcement/Physical Security Sector
2. Third-Party Service Providers
3. Agriculture Sector
4. Critical Infrastructure/Utilities/Energy Sector
5. Package Delivery/Health Care Sector
6. Newsgathering/Filmmaking/Entertainment Sector

Each sector listed above explained the potential economic impacts of releasing this critical rule on their industry.

¹The CDA is an independent non-profit organization comprised of the leaders in the commercial drone industry. The CDA brings together commercial drone end-users; manufacturers; third-party service providers; advanced air mobility (“AAM”) companies; drone security companies; and vertical markets including oil and gas, precision agriculture, construction, security, communications technology, infrastructure, newsgathering, filmmaking, and more. The CDA works with policymakers across government to craft policies for industry growth and educates the public on the safe, responsible use of commercial drones to achieve economic benefits and humanitarian gains, including the countless public benefits enabled by commercial drone beyond visual line-of-sight (BVLOS) operations.

²AUVSI is the world’s largest non-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of uncrewed systems, autonomy, and robotics. We represent corporations and professionals from more than 60 countries that are involved in industry, government, and academia. AUVSI’s primary markets span the defense, civil, and commercial industries. Uncrewed systems represent an expansive market within the transportation system, and it is our mission to ensure all types of uncrewed systems, autonomy, and robotics companies that work with us have access to the resources they need to be successful in such a highly competitive industry. AUVSI’s Air Advocacy Committee (“AAC”) sets the legislative and regulatory priorities in the air domain for the association via input and feedback from its membership. The AAC is comprised of a diverse group of member companies, including UAS operators, domestic and allied UAS manufacturers, software companies, defense contractors, counter-UAS companies, AAM companies, Drone as First Responder (“DFR”) companies, public safety experts, and much more.

³Letter from the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure to Secretary Pete Buttigieg and Administrator Michael Whitaker (Oct. 21, 2024), https://transportation.house.gov/uploadedfiles/2024-10-21_-_bvlos_letter_to_dot_faa.pdf.

In addition to this letter, we are submitting the following supporting documents from those meetings, all included at the end of this letter as appendices. These documents make key arguments on why the BVLOS NPRM must move forward before January 20, with supporting data and statistics on the economic impact a BVLOS rule will have on each sector. These documents have been uploaded to their respective OIRA dockets:

- November 22, 2024, EO 12866 meeting between AUVSI/CDA leadership and OIRA:
 1. Levitate Capital White Paper Enterprise Market 2020
 2. International BVLOS Survey—CDA AUVSI (11.27.24)
 3. CDA AUVSI 12866 Submission (11.27.24)
 4. AASHTO Mission Control 2019 AASHTO UAS-Drone Survey of All 50 State DOTs
 5. It's Past Time to Move Drone Rulemaking Forward—AUVSI—CDA Inside Unmanned Systems Op-Ed
- December 2, 2024, EO 12866 meeting between public safety/law enforcement/physical security sector companies and OIRA:
 1. Leave-Behind—AUVSI & CDA Membership BVLOS EO 12866 Meeting—Public Safety—Law Enforcement—Physical Security Sector
- December 3, 2024, EO 12866 meeting between third-party service providers and OIRA:
 1. Leave-Behind—AUVSI CDA Membership BVLOS EO 12866 Meeting—Third-Party Service Providers Sector
- December 4, 2024, meeting between agriculture sector companies and OIRA:
 1. Leave-Behind—AUVSI & CDA Membership BVLOS EO 12866 Meeting—Agriculture Sector
- December 5, 2024, meeting between critical infrastructure/utilities/energy sector companies and OIRA:
 1. Leave-Behind—BVLOS 12866 Meeting—Critical Infrastructure Energy Utilities Sector (12.6.2024)
 2. NUAIR Economic Impact Letter
- December 5, 2024, meeting between package delivery/health care sector companies and OIRA:
 1. Leave-Behind—AUVSI CDA Membership BVLOS EO 12866 Meeting—Package Delivery and Healthcare Sector (12.6.24)
- December 6, 2024, meeting between newsgathering/filmmaking/entertainment sector companies and OIRA:
 1. Leave-Behind—AUVSI CDA Membership BVLOS EO 12866 Meeting—Newsgathering Filmmaking Entertainment (12.10.2024)

A BVLOS NPRM and subsequent final rule are critical to unlocking the vast benefits of the commercial drone industry for all Americans. Drones offer cost-effective solutions for critical operations including public safety, package delivery, precision agriculture, utilities maintenance, infrastructure inspections, and much more. Further delay puts the United States at risk of losing its global leadership in this new era of aviation, ceding a competitive edge to our competitors and adversaries.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit this important information, and we look forward to working with you to ensure the FAA moves forward with the BVLOS NPRM—and final rule—in a timely manner.

Statement of Robert W. Rose, Cofounder and Chief Executive Officer, Reliable Robotics Corporation, Submitted for the Record by Hon. Garret Graves

Chairman Garret Graves, Ranking Member Cohen, and members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee, Subcommittee on Aviation:

Thank you for your significant bipartisan efforts to enact the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 which provides a long-term and forward-looking flight plan for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Reliable Robotics applauds the members and staff of the United States House Committee on Transportation & Infrastructure for their tireless efforts to achieve consensus on this legislation and the many opportunities for stakeholder input. Throughout the bill, there are clear examples that Congress believes innovation and safety-enhancing technologies are crucial for the United States to retain its leadership role in aviation. With the 5-year FAA reau-

thorization bill now enacted into law, we appreciate this opportunity to provide input on implementation and priorities.

Reliable Robotics was founded in 2017 to develop and bring to market aviation safety-enhancing technologies, including auto-land, auto-taxi, and auto-takeoff, as well as high-integrity navigation and aircraft autonomy. These technologies will prevent the most common causes of fatal aviation accidents and save lives. Our company has significant experience working with the FAA on the certification and operational approval of innovative technologies, which directly informed our feedback during the FAA reauthorization process.

With a comprehensive FAA reauthorization bill, and the priority the incoming Administration places on United States competitiveness, our nation has a unique opportunity to secure leadership positions in the aviation technologies most important to safety and national security. To seize this opportunity, the FAA should leverage tools in the reauthorization bill to focus policy and certification resources on aircraft autonomy. China and the United States are in a race for leadership in aircraft autonomy, which has significant safety and national security implications, and demands decisive policy actions. Taking a data driven approach that is free from outside influences and focuses FAA policy and certification resources on those safety technologies which will save the most lives is what should guide the agency moving forward.

AIRSPACE MODERNIZATION AND INTEGRATION

Through Sections 206 and 207 of the reauthorization bill, Congress provided the FAA with a detailed framework to improve the integration of remotely piloted, autonomous and other Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) use cases into the National Airspace System (NAS). Standing up the Airspace Modernization Office (AMO) and transferring AAM responsibilities to the FAA's aviation safety organization will bring leadership-level focus to integration.

Reliable appreciated the FAA's proactive outreach to industry stakeholders about formation of the AMO this past August. At that time, our company participated in a FAA-led listening session to discuss priorities for the AMO and submitted detailed written feedback. However, we are not aware of a follow-up session, or other opportunity for the FAA to provide responses as they process the inputs from industry. To maintain momentum in standing up the office, it would be helpful for the FAA to provide more regular updates on their progress and offer a detailed schedule on upcoming milestones. Leveraging industry trade associations that represent a broad cross section of certification applicants and operators to organize feedback as the AMO identifies priorities would also provide valuable perspectives.

To set the AMO up for success, it must have the authority and resources to work across the entire Air Traffic Organization (ATO) and other FAA lines of business. In the past, similar efforts to establish integration or modernization functions at the FAA have failed, because resources weren't properly allocated and there was inadequate buy-in from agency leadership. To avoid these failures, the AMO should be established as a separate office, outside of the ATO, with a direct reporting line to the FAA Administrator. In addition, components of the Program Management Organization (PMO) that focus on acquiring and operationalizing new or modernized capabilities should be located within the AMO.

This is crucial, as Congress intended the AMO to focus on "the development of an information-centric NAS," and to be successful, it must be separate from maintenance and support functions, which are important, but not aligned with objectives for the new office. Establishing the AMO as a distinct organization, with necessary components from the PMO and prior NextGen organizations will enable it to coordinate with all lines of business involved in the integration of new airspace users and technologies. While many of the prior NextGen functions can serve as a starting point for the AMO, to achieve its full potential, the organization should have the authority and budget to acquire and develop new capabilities, beyond the existing ATO and NextGen portfolios.

WORKING ACROSS FAA LINES OF BUSINESS TO SUPPORT INNOVATION

Reliable Robotics appreciates how the FAA's dedicated workforce continually engages with our team to advance the certification of aviation safety-enhancing technologies. However, as we move rapidly towards integrating large uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) into controlled airspace, the work will shift from aircraft certification to air traffic and flight standards. Through Section 229, the reauthorization bill creates a leadership-level steering committee that brings together the agency lines of business responsible for integrating large UAS into the NAS. In addition, the group

is charged with creating or updating the FAA's strategy for integrating advanced aviation technologies.

Based on our understanding, this steering committee must be established in early 2025, but we are not aware of any updates on the structure or priorities. Prior to standing up this group, we recommend that the FAA consult industry stakeholders on top priorities to make certain that there is proper representation from across the agency. In addition, this Subcommittee should reinforce the critical importance of selecting FAA leaders with decision making authority to serve on the steering committee.

Also, Section 916 of the reauthorization bill requires the FAA to establish a "Unmanned and Autonomous Flight Advisory Committee." This committee will provide a structured forum for industry experts to work collaboratively with the FAA on policy and guidance that supports safe autonomous aircraft operations. The timeline for implementing this provision is based on the FAA terminating its prior "Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee." Based on our understanding, the FAA ended the charter for the Advanced Aviation Advisory Committee, but we are not aware of a timeline to establish the new Unmanned and Autonomous Flight Advisory Committee. We respectfully recommend that this Subcommittee confirm the timing for establishing the new advisory committee and ensure there are FAA resources allocated to this activity.

FUTURE NAS VISION

The reauthorization bill has a significant focus on leveraging technologies available today, and those that will be developed in the future, to integrate all segments of AAM, including remotely piloted aircraft. For example, Section 932 requires the FAA to establish an approval process for third-party service providers which will play an important role in making the agency more responsive to innovation. This provision will enable the FAA to create a repeatable approval process for third-party providers, offering services such as ground-based detect and avoid and secure command and control links in the NAS. These services will leverage existing NAS infrastructure and enable innovative companies to rapidly meet the needs of AAM operators. Without a consistent and repeatable approval process, one off authorizations or waivers will be necessary, which diverts limited FAA resources and slows the adoption of innovative safety-enhancing technologies.

We respectfully request that Congress closely track the May 2025 deadline for the FAA to establish an approval process for third-party service providers. Clearly communicating the FAA's progress, and any opportunities for stakeholders to provide feedback on the new process will ensure these safety-enhancing services are delivered on time.

* * *

Reliable Robotics is proud to be developing and certifying aviation safety-enhancing aircraft autonomy in the United States. This technology will significantly improve aviation safety, connect more communities with air service and help provide for our national security. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 provides the agency with the tools and resources to be more responsive to innovation, and we look forward to continued engagement with the Subcommittee on Aviation in the coming year.

Please contact Scott O'Brien, Vice President, Legislative Affairs with any additional questions.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. With that, Mr. Terreri, you are recognized for 5 minutes for your testimony.

TESTIMONY OF JASON TERRERI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SYRACUSE REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY, ON BEHALF OF THE AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL-NORTH AMERICA (ACI-NA); ADAM WOODWORTH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WING AVIATION LLC; PETER J. BUNCE, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, GENERAL AVIATION MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION (GAMA); AND GREG REGAN, PRESIDENT, TRANSPORTATION TRADES DEPARTMENT, AFL-CIO (TTD)

TESTIMONY OF JASON TERRERI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SYRACUSE REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY, ON BEHALF OF THE AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL-NORTH AMERICA (ACI-NA)

Mr. TERRERI. Good morning. I am Jason Terreri, the executive director of the Syracuse Regional Airport Authority in New York. I am also here today in my capacity as chair of the U.S. Policy Council for Airports Council International-North America, the trade association for America's airports.

Chairman Sam Graves, Chairman Garret Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and Ranking Member Cohen, thank you for having me here today to share the commercial service airport's perspective on FAA reauthorization implementation.

On behalf of the airport industry, I would like to start by saying thank you. Once fully implemented, the FAA reauthorization bill of 2024 will have significant and positive impacts across the entire airport system. And subcommittee Chairman Graves, thank you for all you have done to help and support airports.

I appreciate this opportunity to explain our position on the act's implementation, including the work both the FAA and Congress need to do to bring this bill's promise to fruition. It is vital that the FAA implements the statutory provisions consistent with congressional intent, and your rigorous oversight through hearings like this are critical to ensure that happens.

The \$4 billion in AIP funding and formula changes included in the act will allow airports to benefit from more AIP entitlement dollars, allowing airports to prioritize important infrastructure projects at their facilities for years to come. While we wait for the resolution of the fiscal year 2025 spending bills, the FAA has not responded to the airport's request for a general sense of how much entitlement dollars will be allocated under the new formulas.

We understand that nothing is certain as it comes to funding, but it is incredibly difficult to plan for projects without having a better idea of how much money we might receive. Also, once the appropriations process is complete, and I emphasize again that the AIP needs a full year of appropriated funding at the \$4 billion level to ensure it functions properly, we ask for your continued oversight to ensure new formulas are executed in the manner you intended.

Next, I would like to highlight two provisions that Congress had to include in the 2024 bill, because the FAA failed to implement the provisions from the 2018 bill. First, is section 776, which expands to all airports the streamlining process for imposing and utilizing passenger facility charges for infrastructure projects while maintaining all current public consultation and comment require-

ments will help the airport infrastructure projects get underway more expeditiously.

The FAA should immediately begin rulemaking by this legislation as airports cannot take advantage of the streamlined process until the FAA's work is complete.

Second is section 743, which prohibits the FAA from regulating the land use of certain airport property that was purchased with local funds. This issue has directly impacted my airport, and it has hurt others, too. Businesses have walked away from economic development opportunities because FAA regulatory determinations take far too long. The FAA should move quickly to amend its land use policy and to account for this new statute. I hope we get a chance to discuss this further today.

On another matter, the airports appreciate this committee's work to facilitate the transition to aircraft firefighting foams that do not contain high levels of PFAS chemicals. Directing the FAA to provide regular transition updates and authorizing funding for airports to transition to the new foams were key provisions in the 2024 act. We are eager to move forward with any transition funding Congress provides, but as with AIP, we are awaiting appropriations.

We are grateful to the many members of this committee that signed on to the letters spearheaded by Congressman Carbajal and Lawler on the need for this funding. We expect to talk to you all more in the new Congress about this transition and other issues involving PFAS at airports.

I would like to conclude with an issue that we spend a lot of time on in Syracuse through our work with the New York Air National Guard and NUAIR, which is the integration of new entrants into the National Airspace System. From my experience, as the only airport in the United States that has fully integrated drone operations, it is essential for airport operators to be at the table with FAA as they proceed and develop the implementation of an updated air traffic management system.

We also need close collaboration with both FAA and prospective AAM and UAS operators regarding the airport and vertiport infrastructure needed to support future operations.

And finally, we need Congress to pass updated UAS detection and mitigation authorities to our Federal partners along with airports and other operators of critical infrastructure with a strong legislative framework upon which to address UAS threats.

In closing, I want to thank you for listening to our concerns and incorporating many of our industry's top policy issues into the recent FAA reauthorization bill. Now that the bill has been signed, there is still a lot of work to do. We will continue to do our part and look forward to working with you and the FAA on the implementation of this important legislation. Thank you.

[Mr. Terreri's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Jason Terreri, Executive Director, Syracuse Regional Airport Authority, on behalf of the Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA)

Good morning. I am Jason Terreri, the Executive Director of Syracuse Regional Airport Authority in New York. Chairman Sam Graves, Chairman Garret Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and Ranking Member Cohen, thank you for providing me the opportunity today to share the commercial-service airports' perspective on FAA reauthorization implementation. I am also here in my capacity as Chair of the U.S. Policy Council at Airports Council International-North America (ACI-NA), the trade association for America's airports.

On behalf of the airport industry, I want to start with a "thank you." Once fully funded and implemented, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 will have significant and positive impacts across the entire airport system. From increasing funding for airport infrastructure to reducing costly regulatory burdens, the new FAA law is full of meaningful and overdue reforms to the FAA and the airport industry. We recognize the 2024 law did not happen in a vacuum, as our industry has been front and center with Congress and this committee through multiple COVID-relief measures, a landmark infrastructure law, and now the latest FAA reauthorization act. We greatly appreciate all your commitment and assistance in helping to keep America's airports open and growing as we are now collectively experiencing our largest passenger volumes ever.

I appreciate this opportunity to explain our position on the implementation of the 2024 FAA Act, including the work both the FAA and Congress need to do to bring the bill's promise to fruition. Since the enactment, we have been pushing the FAA to move quickly on implementing the good work of this Congress, and we ask that moving forward you continue your oversight to ensure that FAA will follow your intent. As I will highlight for you today, the FAA failed to implement several provisions from the 2018 FAA Act, including airport land use and PFC streamlining requirements, that then had to be addressed again in the latest law. It is vital that the FAA implements statutory provisions consistent with congressional intent and your rigorous oversight through hearings like this is critical to ensure this happens.

AIP FUNDING

The Airport Improvement Program (AIP) needs a full year of appropriated funding at \$4 billion in order for the new formula changes to work properly. The formula changes, first proposed by this committee and included in the final bill, will allow all airports to benefit from more AIP entitlement dollars, letting airports prioritize important infrastructure projects at their facilities for years to come. While we wait for a final resolution on the fiscal year 2025 spending bills, airports have asked the FAA for specific dollar amounts of entitlement dollars they should expect, but the FAA has been unwilling to share this information. Although we understand that nothing is certain when it comes to funding, it is incredibly difficult to plan for projects without having a better idea of how much money we might receive. Even a general idea of funding amounts would be helpful. Once the appropriations process is complete, and I emphasize again that AIP needs a full year of appropriated funding at \$4 billion to function properly, we ask that this committee continue oversight to ensure the new formulas are executed in the manner the act intended.

AIRPORT LAND USE

The FAA should move quickly to implement the new congressional instructions on dealing with airport land use included in the 2024 Act and amend the agency's land use policy issued in early 2024 to account for the new statutory regime.

Section 743 of the 2024 Act rewrites a provision from the 2018 Act prohibiting the FAA from regulating, directly or indirectly, the acquisition, use, lease, transfer, or disposal of airport property by an airport owner or operator if the land was not purchased with federal funds, except to ensure that the safety and efficiency of flight operations are maintained, and that fair market value is received.

While the new provision cedes some authority back to FAA on what type of land is subject to oversight, it places some new limits on the agency's authority—such as prohibiting the FAA from extending its review authority to any non-aeronautical portions of a project and setting a 45-day review window for the FAA to raise any objections. These new limits should help move airport projects along more quickly, avoiding costly FAA delays that have hurt airports like Syracuse. Since the land use provision was not implemented properly back in 2018, my airport lost a significant revenue opportunity on a development deal. Since getting this right is this is a top priority for airports, the FAA should socialize the procedures to implement the new

law with their headquarters and regional offices staff and airports as quickly as possible. Real economic opportunities are at stake if the FAA chooses to continue to ignore congressional intent.

PFC STREAMLINING

The FAA should move quickly to start rulemaking on the new pilot program that will significantly reduce the paperwork burden and federal review times for airport infrastructure projects utilizing passenger facility charges (PFCs).

Section 776 of the 2024 Act broadens a pilot program from the 2018 Act allowing airports, under certain conditions and with FAA approval, to file a notice of their intent to impose a PFC rather than file a full application with the FAA. While the pilot program maintains all presently required air carrier consultation and comment requirements and permits the FAA to require additional review in certain circumstances, it also sets limits on when the FAA may object to an airport's request. Additionally, the section leaves in place the FAA's current process for allowing participation in the pilot program until the FAA conducts new rulemaking to account for the new law, which is already significantly delayed from its September 13 deadline.

Already having missed the statutory deadline, the FAA should start the rulemaking as quickly as possible and consider the public comments ACI-NA filed earlier this year on ways to improve the pilot program so airport infrastructure projects can get underway more expeditiously.

FAA OPERATIONS

Our airport enjoys a strong working relationship with our FAA representatives. However, the post-pandemic period has been difficult. I am fortunate to run an airport that is growing, and our challenges are mostly due to regulatory and financial constraints that limit the pace of our expansion. We need an FAA that is present at our airports, cognizant of the economic environments in which we operate, and committed to expediting, not delaying, development. We have worked through most of the issues we have experienced such as land releases, but I would urge the committee to work with the FAA to ensure they are on the job and focused on being partners in the mission to grow.

FIREFIGHTING FOAM TRANSITION

Airports appreciate the committee's work with airports and the aircraft rescue and firefighting community to facilitate the transition from aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) to fluorine-free foam (F3). Directing the FAA to provide regular transition updates to airports and authorizing funding for airports to transition to the new foams were key provisions in the 2024 Act. We are eager to move forward with any F3 transition funding Congress provides, but, as with the AIP, we are waiting for appropriations.

The Senate's transportation spending bill contains the first \$70 million in transition funds. ACI-NA worked with Congressmen Carbajal and Lawler on a bipartisan letter to House appropriators signed by over 80 members—including many on this committee—asking the House to accept the Senate provision in a final spending bill. We ask you to continue to weigh in with appropriators to ensure that this bipartisan provision is properly funded in the final spending bill.

Unfortunately, airports' work on PFAS does not just end with funding. Earlier this year the EPA finalized a rule designating PFOA and PFOS as a hazardous substance under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (CERCLA). Airports, as mandated by the federal government, have used firefighting foams containing PFOA and PFOS for decades. We have done so in good faith to meet our federal mandate of keeping the traveling public safe. Now that we know these chemicals have harmful health and environmental impacts, airports are beginning the costly transition to new firefighting foams. However, being held liable for doing what the federal government has required us to do puts U.S. airports in an impossible position. As part of EPA's final rule, the agency issued an administrative policy that it did not intend to pursue entities like airports, but since this is subject to administrative discretion it is not binding law. We ask that Congress grant U.S. airports a specific CERCLA-liability exemption. ACI-NA and its members strongly support S. 1433, the Airports PFAS Liability Protection Act introduced by Senator Lummis, and we hope this issue will be high on congressional agenda next year.

AIRSIDE SAFETY

Airports want to participate with the FAA in initiatives to improve runway, taxiway, and apron safety, including implementation of the broad provisions under Title III of the 2024 Act, as well as in separate initiatives dealing with apron safety, FOD detection, airside ground vehicle tracking, and continuing improvements to signage and marking. As significant stakeholders in the U.S. aviation system, airports want to ensure that safety measures are effective, affordable, and appropriate.

NEPA PROCESSES

Airports look forward to implementation of the new CatEx provision in the 2024 Act, which hopefully will enable limited environmental review resources to be focused on larger projects that really require this focus. Your continued attention to these matters is appreciated.

AIR TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT

Airports are concerned about the current state of the U.S. air traffic control system. Although we have seen benefits from the decade and a half focus on modernization of the air traffic control system known as NextGen, we have seen an array of NAS challenges causing delays, disruption, and—most critically—adversely impact the safety of the U.S. National Airspace System (NAS). These challenges include air traffic control staffing, training, and the sustainment of critical NAS equipment from air traffic control towers, surveillance systems, communications systems, and navigational aids. They also include emerging issues such as bolstering the resiliency of the NAS to cyber threats and the integration of new entrant aircraft.

We appreciate the provisions in the 2024 Reauthorization Act that address these issues, which are critical to the safe and efficient operation of the NAS.

NEW ENTRANT INTEGRATION

New entrant aircraft—inclusive of uncrewed aircraft systems (UAS) and advanced air mobility (AAM) aircraft—have captured the imagination of the aviation industry and open the door to an exciting array of innovative use cases.

Integrating both categories of new entrants into a mature and complex airspace system is a significant undertaking that requires a re-envisioning of how our NAS is managed. At Syracuse, we have been proud to be on the cutting edge of this effort through our longstanding partnership with the 174th Attack Wing of the New York Air National Guard, which operates the MQ-9 from our airport, as well as through our partnership with NUAIR, who managed the New York FAA-designated UAS Test Site for over a decade and recently relocated their operations to our airport as they advance their UAS operations and expand into AAM.

Through this work with our key partners, I have had a front row seat to the challenges we need to confront in integrating new entrant aircraft into the NAS. It is essential for airport operators to be at the table as the FAA proceeds with developing and implementing unmanned air traffic system management and integration of AAM into the current air traffic management system. Airport operators have critical equities in the safety, efficiency, and community impacts these integration efforts. We also see the need for close collaboration with both the FAA and prospective AAM and UAS operators regarding the airport and vertiport infrastructure needed to support future operations. Although airports were not specifically named in the 2024 FAA Act as a stakeholder in sec. 916, it is important for airports to have a seat on the Unmanned and Autonomous Flight Advisory Committee created by this section.

Challenges and risks associated with these new entrant aircraft—particularly UAS—have multiplied as UAS technology has matured and become increasingly accessible to all, posing numerous risks. We believe it is essential for airport operators to have both regulatory and statutory foundations that enable us to protect aviation infrastructure from such bad actors. Unfortunately, provisions that address rapidly maturing provisions were not included in the 2024 Act. I urge you and your colleagues in the Senate to move to resolve differences between House and Senate versions of UAS detection and mitigation provisions and provide airport operators—along with other operators of critical infrastructure—a strong legislative framework upon which to address UAS threats.

Finally, both UAS and AAM will rely on fundamentally different energy sources than today's general aviation and commercial aircraft, with a heavy focus on electricity and an emerging focus on hydrogen. We encourage you to work closely with your colleagues on the Energy and Commerce Committee going forward to address

critical energy supply and distribution challenges that increasing UAS and AAM operations will drive.

* * * *

In closing, thank you for listening to our concerns and incorporating many of our industry's top policy issues into the recent FAA reauthorization law. Airports realize that even though the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 has been signed into law, much work remains. We will continue to do our part and look forward to working with you and the FAA on the implementation of this important legislation.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Mr. Terreri, thank you, and I want to say, I think I can speak for the full panel here that we have great frustration with the FAA's lack of clarity to you as well in regard to the 5-year authorization levels, and the reason we do a 5-year bill is to provide that clarity and certainty moving forward, and so, just know that you have a number of allies. We did it for a reason. We wrote it for a reason, and we are pushing them to get the information out to airports as soon as possible.

Mr. Woodworth, thank you for being back. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

TESTIMONY OF ADAM WOODWORTH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WING AVIATION LLC

Mr. WOODWORTH. Good morning, members of the subcommittee, and thank you, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, subcommittee Chairman Graves, and subcommittee Ranking Member Cohen for inviting me to offer my perspective on the implementation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. I am here in my capacity as the chief executive officer of Wing, a logistics company focused on package delivery by drone of retail goods, food items, and medical supplies. My testimony will offer a broad overview of where we have been, where we are going, and what you can do now to help American industry.

A year and a half ago, as this committee was ramping up its efforts to assemble an FAA reauthorization bill, I testified about the need for a predictable and pragmatic approach to drone integration and a regulatory framework that will allow us to fly by rule rather than by exception. For several years, the United States progress had stalled. This committee recognized that and acted in a bipartisan fashion to provide oversight and craft sensible policy solutions to advance safe drone integration.

I am thankful to Congress and to this committee's leadership that the Reauthorization Act of 2024 includes numerous provisions that enable the FAA to move the drone operations forward. This is working, and we are making real progress again in the United States.

The FAA streamlined the waiver process and created a new criteria for making determinations that enables timely updates to our hardware and software. It has approved beyond visual line of sight operations and enabled us to fly with our detect and avoid systems without the need for visual observers. And in north Texas, industry has implemented a UAS traffic management structure overseen by the FAA, which provides a framework for commercial BVLOS operators that is repeatable nationwide and has drawn interest from stakeholders all around the globe.

This has enabled true expansion in the domestic market. This year, Wing's delivery service has grown across the DFW area where we currently operate from 16 partner locations to the service area covering an estimated population of over 2 million people. We are operating every day with the United States largest employer, with Walmart, and its largest food aggregator, with DoorDash, delivering tens of thousands of orders this year alone. We can also now field the best versions of our service rolling out timely updates to aircraft hardware and software that improve accessibility and capabilities to our customers.

We have seen how drone delivery can improve the experience of customers day-to-day and we have seen the impact drone delivery can have when it matters most as we conducted disaster assistance in North Carolina in partnership with Walmart after Hurricane Helene.

We have done this while continuing to build relationships with the communities we operate in and around. We have participated in some of general aviation's largest events allowing aviators and the general public to see what drone delivery actually looks like and showing those communities how we can safely share airspace.

We continue to have the support from the communities we operate in, showing that there is true economic and customer demand for these services, and this progress has given us confidence to invest further in the U.S. market and has come from the positive changes that we have seen at the FAA because of your work.

Beyond our operations in Texas and Virginia, we are now looking to further expand into more States starting with North Carolina and then further into Florida next year. Companies across our industry have seen similar advances in their operations, and this progress has been truly transformative for our businesses. So, I want to ask for your continued support and oversight as the FAA reauthorization moves toward implementation over the coming year.

First, we need to publish the BVLOS draft notice of proposed rulemaking. It is critical to get this rule out to allow for public and industry comment.

Second, the FAA must work to streamline the environmental approval process. This remains the longest lead item for expansion and must see a more programmatic and nationwide approach to this process. While the FAA is making strides here, the progress is still slow.

Third, we must consider a pragmatic approach to hazardous material treatment. The FAA must provide a more sensible approach for small drones to carry everyday items like thermometers, small batteries, and over-the-counter medicine.

And fourth, the FAA must continue to focus on implementing section 927 which calls for the FAA to streamline and improve the process of issuing 44807 waivers.

The great news is that the FAA reauthorization bill provides a blueprint for all of this, and your oversight is critical to ensure that the FAA now builds the outcomes that you intended and cements the gains that have been made so far.

Before I close my remarks, I would like to take a moment to offer my congratulations to subcommittee Chairman Garret Graves for

his long career in committed public service. Today's hearing is an opportunity to recognize your lifelong pursuit of advancing sensible policy solutions. Your constituents in Louisiana and indeed the whole aviation sector are better for it, and we wish you well in your future endeavors.

I thank the leadership of this committee for the opportunity to participate in today's hearing, and I will be pleased to answer your questions at the appropriate time. Thank you.

[Mr. Woodworth's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Adam Woodworth, Chief Executive Officer, Wing Aviation LLC

INTRODUCTION

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Subcommittee Chairman Graves, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Cohen, thank you for inviting me to offer my perspective on implementation of the landmark FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. I offer my testimony as Chief Executive Officer of Wing, a logistics company focused on package delivery by drone of retail goods, food items, and medical samples and supplies.

Across the industry, commercial drone operators like Wing prioritize safe integration of drones into the airspace while providing our partners, customers, and communities with safe, efficient and sustainable service. My testimony will offer a broad overview of where we have been, where we are going, and what you can do now to help support the continued growth of the American drone industry. We appreciate the proactive and bipartisan approach members of this committee have taken to address these important issues.

A year and a half ago, I testified about the need for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to take a predictable and pragmatic approach to drone integration and enable a regulatory framework that would allow us to fly by rule rather than by exception. Members of this committee recognized that American progress in drone policy had stalled and they acted in bipartisan fashion to provide oversight and craft sensible policy solutions to advance safe drone integration. I am thankful to Congress—and this Committee's leadership in particular—for an FAA Reauthorization Act which includes numerous provisions that addressed the challenges I discussed. Your efforts worked, and we are now making real progress again in the United States.

PROGRESS SINCE 2023

To the FAA's credit, they began working to make progress to advance the United States' drone industry in response to your oversight. For example, the FAA has streamlined the waiver process and has created a Criteria for Making Determinations (CMD) process. These improvements have enabled the agency to approve true beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations utilizing our detect and avoid system without the need for visual observers, as well as more efficiently accept aircraft and aircraft software changes. This allows us to field the best version of our service, rolling out timely updates to aircraft hardware and software that improve accessibility and capabilities to our customers.

In North Texas, Wing and industry partners have initiated a UAS Traffic Management (UTM) governance structure overseen by the FAA that provides a framework to introduce strategic coordination among professional BVLOS operators that is repeatable nationwide and has drawn significant interest from regulators around the world as a commonsense, lightweight approach to airspace integration. All this progress—and the value it has shown our partners and customers—has enabled Wing to continue to grow our services throughout the past year.

We have expanded Wing's delivery service across the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metropolitan area and currently operate from 16 partner locations, covering a population of more than 2 million people. We are operating with the country's largest employer, Walmart, and the country's largest food aggregator, DoorDash, every day—delivering tens of thousands of orders this year.

We have seen how drone delivery can improve the experience of customers day to day. And we have also seen the impact drone delivery can have when it matters

most, when we conducted disaster assistance in North Carolina in partnership with Walmart after Hurricane Helene.

This progress has carried over outside the United States as well. Due in part to the demonstrated safety and readiness of our technology, we are now flying blood samples between the rooftops of two hospitals in the heart of London. And in Australia, we have opened service in Melbourne, furthering our progress in mature markets where regulation allows for scaled operations.

We have seen rapid progress across the industry over the last 18 months in the United States. During our own 2024 expansion, we have continued to see strong support from the communities we operate in and strong customer demand:

- We have averaged a 75 and above Net Promoter Score (NPS) in the DFW metro area compared with parcel delivery services receiving an average NPS of 21 per a recent Qualtrics XM Institute survey;¹
- In 2024 alone, we conducted over 40 community events in DFW, as well as nine Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) outreach events, and met with over 20 city councils and planning and zoning commissions.
- Most importantly we engaged with thousands of residents and feedback collected at local events and Walmart stores reflected an over 95 percent positive sentiment.

While doing this we've invested in continuing to build relationships with the communities we operate in and around. We have participated in general aviation's largest events, including EAA AirVenture and SUN 'n FUN airshows. Allowing aviators and the public to see what drone delivery actually looks like.

The progress of the last year has given us the confidence to invest more significantly in the US market. To maintain this momentum we have announced our intention to further expand into additional states, starting with North Carolina and then further into Florida.

PATH FORWARD

The progress over the last year and a half has been transformative and I want to ask for this committee's and Congress' continued support and oversight as we move towards implementing the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 over the coming year. We must ensure that the United States does not fall behind other competing countries in this new era of aviation. The good news is the Act provides the right blueprint for these reforms, and I want to draw your attention to six specific issues it addresses where Congress' oversight is critical:

- *First, the FAA must publish a notice of proposed rulemaking establishing a framework for BVLOS operations in the United States this year.* While we are encouraged the FAA has sent the proposed BVLOS rule to the White House, it is critical to complete the interagency process and publish the proposed rule-making so that stakeholders can provide public comments on the draft rule and see how the FAA has interpreted the bipartisan direction of this committee and Congress;
- *Second, the FAA must work to streamline the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.* We can do this without compromising existing environmental standards.
 - While the FAA is making strides here, the progress is too slow. We must see a more programmatic and nationwide approach to NEPA as called for in the Act.
 - This is the longest lead item today when Wing wants to expand our service to a new area and often delays our service availability.
- *Third, we must consider pragmatic approaches to hazardous materials.* The FAA and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration must follow the direction of this committee and provide a more sensible and pragmatic approach for small drones to carry everyday items like thermometers, watch batteries, and certain "over the counter" medicines and goods such as hand sanitizer.
 - The current aviation regulatory requirements are designed for large airplanes with people on board carrying large quantities of dangerous goods. We must

¹Qualtrics XM Institute, *Economics of NPS in the Parcel Delivery Industry*, 2021, https://www.qualtrics.com/m/www.xminstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/XMInstitute_DataSnapshot_EconomicsOfNPS2020_ParcelDeliveryServices-1.pdf. For reference, a NPS above 20 is considered "favorable", and any NPS over 50 is considered "excellent" and represents a very high degree of consumer satisfaction.

address this burdensome regulation and enable a more sensible framework for uncrewed aircraft carrying small quantities of everyday items.

- *Fourth, the FAA should build on progress on waivers designed to streamline and improve rulemaking processes.* The FAA should implement Section 927 of the Act to continue to improve progress on waivers while we wait on the beyond visual line of sight rulemaking to be adjudicated in the rulemaking process. By implementing Section 927, applicants can have their ideas evaluated on the merits by the agency in a more streamlined fashion, helping the pace of acceptance keep up with the pace of demand and technological safety improvements.
- *Fifth, the FAA should designate Network Remote ID as a true alternative means of compliance for the Remote Identification Rule.* As the FAA furthers its rulemaking for BVLOS operations, it should adopt an alternative means of compliance—consistent with the ASTM F3411 standards—following the direction provided in Section 907 of the Act. This has been utilized in several FAA demonstrations and is being implemented in markets beyond the United States.
- *Sixth, the FAA must develop additional expertise on automation.* The FAA should consult with industry on Section 924 of the Act, which calls for the FAA to develop expertise on automation. Specifically, the FAA should identify FAA processes and regulations that need to change to accommodate the increasingly automated role of a remote operator of an unmanned aircraft system.

All of these steps are critical to ensuring the Act's implementation moves the industry forward and maintains and builds upon the progress we have made in recent years. Now is the time to keep that momentum going strong. Delays in implementing these proposals have a negative impact on American consumers and businesses.

CLOSING

To its credit and thanks to your work, the FAA has made significant strides forward over the past year and a half by improving and streamlining its interim approval processes. This has enabled the industry's continuing expansion towards nationwide scaled operations, but your oversight is critical to ensure that the FAA now cements these recent gains. The good news is the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 provides the blueprint for all of this. Now we must move collectively and expeditiously to implement the vision that this committee and Congress articulated so that consumers and businesses can benefit from what this aviation sector has to offer.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you, Mr. Woodworth. You said you are expanding to Louisiana? Is that what I heard? Thank you.

Next, we are going to go to Mr. Bunce. Thank you for being back in the committee. I know your punchcard is almost full in terms of the number of times you have been here. I also know that you are moving toward the next phase in life, and I do want to thank you for your distinguished service, of course, in the United States Air Force when I met you, gosh, probably 25 years ago, and for your great stakeholder representation over the years. You have been a good ally to us in helping us identify issues and solutions, and I want to thank you for being back. I recognize you for 5 minutes.

TESTIMONY OF PETER J. BUNCE, PRESIDENT AND CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, GENERAL AVIATION MANUFACTURERS ASSOCIATION (GAMA)

Mr. BUNCE. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and during those 25 years that you and I have known each other, I just have been so impressed with the way you approach policy and your service to the Nation, and I can't thank you enough. And the proof is really in the pudding with what you all did together, you working with Mr. Cohen and Mr. Larsen and Sam Graves all working together and this whole committee. Those of us that make our living in this

profession, you made us proud that you could get together when we were all in this room at the very beginning of the Congress and they said the drama is going to be down the hall. We are going to get our work done here, and you did it.

And it wasn't just the bill itself. It was the hearing process that led up to it, because the FAA started listening. One of our big issues that we absolutely need to live on into the new administration is rulemaking. Rulemaking was broken. The FAA would use this ex parte as a reason not to even talk to foreign authorities as they are going through the long rulemaking process. Things sat on the shelf for years and years.

And what did the FAA do? They started listening to you and they started promulgating rules and getting the process going. It is not perfect yet. It isn't moving fast enough, but it is going forward, and that is why we cannot go back to that two-for-one for aviation. That idea that we could get rid of two rules or more for every one we promulgate works for other agencies, and I am all for less Government regulation, but in aviation, we can't do anything without a regulation. They are enabling, and that goes to policy and guidance, so, we really look to you to be able to help us make sure we emphasize to the new administration that that is very important.

Successes that have happened because of the pressure that you have put on the FAA, the release of the SFAR, which basically is the operational rules that allow advanced air mobility aircraft to enter into the system now is published, which now once the aircraft is certified, hopefully next year, they will start entering service.

And in companion to that is the Advanced Air Mobility Coordination and Leadership Act that you, Chairman Graves, along with Member Davids—when you published that, it got an all-of-Government approach to look for advanced air mobility. We were just briefed by DOT last week they are getting ready to release the final report, but we need the new administration to embrace it, because that is the way the United States will lead in this transformation of technology. And so, we hope that you will all emphasize to the new administration the importance of moving that forward.

As Ranking Member Larsen mentioned, what we've done with workforce is critically important, and we hope the appropriators follow through in allowing the manufacturing workforce to benefit from the grants. Our companies have great programs to be able to tap in to high schools, to be able to get them into the factories and encourage them, whether they are going to tech school or whether they are going to college to be able to take advantage of scholarship programs and that, but this seed money will help those institutions be able to give us our seed corn to be able to grow our workforce.

And that applies to the FAA as well. Right now, the FAA workforce, 40 percent have under 4 years of experience. And so, they are having success recruiting out of colleges to be able to build their workforce. But they are still very green, and we all know with what has happened in our focus on production quality, and things like that that happen in a factory, we need very qualified people to work at the FAA. And these workforce grants will help them to recruit the workforce that we need in the industry to be able to do our jobs.

We also want to be able to leverage this new technology that is out there, so, in the bill, you focus on mobile clearances. It becomes very important that we use digital communications to give communications to launch clearances, especially for advanced air mobility and aircraft. And also to be able to go in and finish the rulemaking not only on beyond visual line of sight but what we call MOSAIC, which is basically a new way to streamline the certification of light aircraft that are out there, to be able to make them cheaper and more affordable for people to get into aviation and then grow in their experience, to be able to be our great airline skilled workforce.

The investment facilities and equipment, Mr. Larsen mentioned it, when you put the emphasis on having awareness of what is happening on runways and taxiways and everything, that becomes very important, and the FAA followed through with that to be able to deploy more cost-effective systems that use this ADS-B technology that we all pioneered several years ago to be able to help with runway awareness.

So, this bill has done tremendous amount of good for this Nation, and we just need to keep the initiative going. I look forward to your questions.

[Mr. Bunce's prepared statement follows:]

Prepared Statement of Peter J. Bunce, President and Chief Executive Officer, General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA)

On behalf of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association, thank you for the opportunity to testify on behalf of our membership on the implementation of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024 (P.L. 118-63). As the 118th Congress concludes its work and we look toward the holiday season, our membership is grateful and appreciative of the leadership, determination, and bipartisan effort that culminated in passage of the law in May.

We want to thank the leadership of the Subcommittee on Aviation, Chairman Garret Graves and Ranking Member Steve Cohen, the full Transportation and Infrastructure Committee (T&I) leadership, Chairman Sam Graves and Ranking Member Rick Larsen, as well as all the members of this Committee for crafting this significant piece of bipartisan legislation. I want to express a special note of thanks and appreciation to Chairman Garret Graves. He is held in high regard by the GAMA staff and membership, and we look forward to continuing to work with him as he leaves Congress and looks to take on his next great chapter.

The 2024 FAA Reauthorization is a tremendous accomplishment that should be lauded for its comprehensive nature and broad scope of issues it tackles. It should have a lasting impact given the strong foundation of consensus and bipartisan support it is built upon. If properly implemented, it will have a meaningful and positive influence on the aviation sector and general aviation community.

For GAMA, the legislation contains the key priorities that our membership advocated for including policies that advance safety, jobs, innovation, and global competitiveness in aviation. The challenge now is to ensure that FAA prioritizes the timely implementation of the law and both Congress and the Administration stay the course and meet the funding and other requirements of this measure.

In the U.S., general aviation supports \$247 billion in total economic output annually and 1.2 million total jobs, with GAMA companies having facilities in 49 states. GAMA members include more than 140 of the world's leading manufacturers of general aviation airplanes, rotorcraft and powered-lift aircraft and their engines, avionics, components, and related technologies. GAMA members are also providers of maintenance and repair services, fixed-based operations, pilot and maintenance training, and aircraft management companies. Additionally, GAMA represents companies in the emerging sector of advanced air mobility (AAM), which includes the development of electric and hybrid propelled vertical take-off and landing aircraft and autonomous systems for civil purposes. Industry activity takes place at more than 5,000 public-use airports, connecting small and medium-sized communities to

air service across the U.S. and supporting businesses, jobs and many diverse operations ranging from agriculture to law enforcement, fire, medical and other emergency rescue services.

AT ALTITUDE WITH TAILWINDS

Since the law's enactment, the FAA has met several milestones and should be commended for their work. Some examples include the recent publication of the Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) for operating and licensing rules for powered-lift aircraft. This was an important step forward for the AAM sector and serves as a strong basis for bringing this innovation to the marketplace. Work remains to shape the permanent AAM regulatory and infrastructure framework, but a strong foundation to build on is in place thanks to the legislation.

The FAA also is moving forward on the cybersecurity provisions outlined in the bill by releasing a notice of proposed rulemaking for initial and continued airworthiness for transport category airplanes, engines, and propellers. Additionally, as directed by the bill, FAA and TSA have increased their collaboration on cybersecurity measures while respecting the lines of jurisdiction of the respective agencies with FAA taking the leadership role on aircraft, aircraft systems, and air traffic. This approach aligns with National Security Memorandum 22 on Critical Infrastructure and the direction in the reauthorization.

AWAITING TAKEOFF CLEARANCE

A central tenet of GAMA's reauthorization requests was to address challenges in the FAA's rulemaking and regulatory processes. The cybersecurity rule mentioned earlier has finally advanced thanks to continued attention from Congress. However, this rulemaking also underscores the problems in the rulemaking process given the FAA aviation rulemaking advisory committee submitted recommendations in 2016 which were promulgated and adopted by the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) in 2020. We will likely not see the FAA final rule until 2025.

As this Committee realized, a contributing factor in preventing safety and innovation from moving forward and benefiting the aviation system has been significant delays in the FAA's promulgation of rulemaking, policies, and guidance which has caused a large backlog of technical standards, policy memos, orders, and advisory circulars necessary for implementation. This delays the development of new products and disadvantages U.S. manufacturers in the international marketplace. Civil aviation is unique given that even minor changes that enhance safety are prohibited in the absence of government approved standards and guidance. In aviation, the biggest challenge to enabling efficiency is not to stop rulemaking and other regulatory materials related to the promulgation of safety and technical standards: instead, it is to find ways to move them forward in a timely, transparent, and accountable manner to facilitate advances in new technology and enhance U.S. aviation safety, leadership, and competitiveness.

One key element for addressing these obstacles was included in FAA Reauthorization: the establishment of the new Assistant Administrator for Rulemaking and Regulatory Improvement office. This office, reporting to the FAA Administrator and part of the management team, is designed to address key rulemaking challenges, improve coordination, and yield support for safety, innovation, and international leadership. Our understanding is the FAA is working internally to stand up this office and implement this important position, however, reprogramming of existing funds or specific requests for new funds may be required to fulfill this objective.

Our membership strongly supports the creation and integration of this office into the FAA organization, in an expeditious manner as well as establishing clear roles, responsibilities, and accountability. An effective rulemaking process, which includes promulgation of policies and guidance, is critical to ending FAA's own version of Groundhog Day on regulatory materials where in the absence of final rulemakings, they must promulgate the same special conditions and exemptions again and again on project after project.

An example of the importance of an effective and efficient rulemaking process is the FAA's Modernization of Special Airworthiness Certification (MOSAIC). The general aviation community is eagerly awaiting the final rule which was directed by Congress for implementation within two years but has been contemplated for much longer. This enabling rule will incentivize manufacturers to produce a broader scope of light-sport aircraft that can more efficiently incorporate safety enhancements and more versatility by expanding the existing and proven use of industry consensus standards. These changes will benefit many segments of our community, including manufacturers, pilots, aircraft owners, and the flight training community. We understand the FAA is on track to publish the MOSAIC rule, and we recognize the

important role Congress has played in moving this forward. We encourage policymakers to continue to support the development and implementation of this important rule.

Additional work is also ahead for the FAA is to advance a rulemaking to normalize unmanned aircraft systems (UAS) beyond the visual line of sight (BVLOS). GAMA is supportive of the safe integration of BVLOS operation as noted in comments to the docket. Integrating UAS operation into the National Airspace System (NAS) through this BVLOS rulemaking over the next few years in addition to follow-on rulemaking activities to address larger aircraft and operations at higher altitudes will require that the FAA has an efficient and effective rulemaking process. The FAA should also have a way to evaluate and rapidly incorporate detect and avoid technology into UAS flight control logic to manage increasing demands from stakeholders across the aviation industry.

As an association that is also fortunate to represent companies that are headquartered all over the world, GAMA has also been a consistent advocate for safety cooperation and harmonization between bilateral partners to support the flow of commerce into the global marketplace. The FAA must ensure that aviation safety agreements, especially with leading aircraft states of design, deliver on their promise to enhance regulatory effectiveness and efficiency and support product delivery into the domestic and international marketplace. This remains critical as aviation products and safety enhancing technologies must be type certificated by the FAA to enter the domestic marketplace and validated with foreign authorities before being accepted into global markets. U.S. aviation has benefited from a long-standing system that has facilitated the flow of aviation products based on aviation safety agreements rather than economic considerations. Strengthening that system should be a continuing focus of FAA and other aviation authorities. Recent decisions by FAA and other aviation authorities to establish performance metrics and make other improvements in the system are encouraging. We thank the Committee for helping to drive that progress.

IN CHOCKS AWAITING ENGINE START

There are also several important areas of interest where we are not yet seeing tangible progress, despite direction in the FAA Reauthorization to do so. GAMA advocated for many provisions that are critical to safety and technical expertise of the government and industry workforce, as well as efforts to better leverage federal investments and technologies to move the aviation sector forward.

For example, GAMA has consistently been a proponent of the FAA Aviation Workforce Development Program and strongly supports the FAA Reauthorization, which added an aviation manufacturing component to complement the existing pilot and maintenance programs. The industry faces a critical workforce shortage which must be addressed to maintain industry leadership. Prioritizing this investment will support the education and recruitment of aviation manufacturing workers and aerospace engineers as well as enhancing industry training and technical competence the aviation industry demands. While we celebrate the addition of manufacturing to this program, the reality is that appropriations funding is needed to move forward.

Continued training for FAA personnel and knowledge-sharing opportunities with industry are also crucial to bolstering the technical expertise of the FAA and enhancing their oversight capabilities. The FAA's technical competencies and resources correlate directly with the industry's ability to bring new products and safety enhancements to the marketplace. Continued strong funding is needed for FAA's aviation certification and safety activities and we urge the Congress and Administration to provide these resources and facilitate critical hiring and training.

We also applaud the reauthorization's focus and scrutiny of the Department of Transportation's (DOT) and FAA's telework policy. To properly conduct the agency's mission, the safety workforce should be physically located where and when they can effectively collaborate in-person and develop their professional and technical expertise through on-the-job knowledge transfer and to enable timely decision making for safety certification and conducting oversight activities. We look forward to the agency moving to address this directive.

The FAA Reauthorization also recognizes the importance of planning ahead to ensure that FAA is prepared to support the U.S. aviation activities of tomorrow. The FAA needs to work with industry to launch the Future State of Type Certification Process study mandated in the law. This study will propose ways to improve the safety, effectiveness, and efficiency of the certification process by better leveraging the use of digitization, modeling techniques, and software systems and developing a more robust risk-based approach for compliance and oversight activities. Addition-

ally, the study will look at how to introduce safety improvements and corrective actions into the certification process and evaluate best practices and tools used by other certification authorities outside the U.S. This work has the potential to illustrate how technology and ingenuity can better serve the FAA's critical safety role in a more effective manner. This study will also complement other reauthorization provisions regarding utilization of advanced tools and modernization of transport airplanes and propulsion certification.

The pro-technology and innovation basis of the FAA Reauthorization is underscored by the provision that creates a pilot program to deliver clearances via mobile devices (e.g. tablets) through Internet Protocol. Previous FAA funded trials have illustrated this technology delivers functionality and can be enabled safely and securely while simultaneously delivering fuel savings and operational efficiencies. The FAA needs to ramp up this pilot program, which builds upon prior agency research efforts, and will have great benefit for general aviation pilots and controllers as well as the overall system by making operations at key airports more predictable.

MANAGING GROUND AND AIR TRAFFIC

The reality is for our membership and the broader aviation sector to flourish we must also have a strong and sound U.S. air traffic system. This is a vital public good, supporting national security, small communities, and businesses across the country. A forward-looking vision for the FAA's management of the air traffic control system is essential. This is critical as FAA must keep pace with an evolving industry with current users and new entrants placing new and changing demands on the system. The FAA Reauthorization, if properly implemented, provides such a road map for increasing the efficiency of the system, enhancing the air traffic workforce, evaluating system capital investment needs and examining the consolidation or reorganizing of facilities and equipment.

The FAA Reauthorization required the creation of a program to further system design and operational approvals for remote towers, prioritizing airports without permanent towers and small and rural communities to expand air traffic services. We hope the Committee will continue its focus on this program.

As part of these continuing modernization efforts, GAMA strongly believes that the Administration and Congress should consider making changes to the administration of the Airport & Airway Trust Fund (AATF) that will give the FAA the ability to more effectively utilize the AATF balance, collected from aviation users, for facility upgrades and technology modernization. This initiative has broad stakeholder support, which is notable given past efforts to improve the air traffic system have not achieved such consensus and, therefore, hindered the ability to address these investments in a direct and constructive fashion.

ADDITIONAL FLIGHT BENEFITS

Collaboration has also been prevalent between government and industry in other areas. For example, recommendations of the federal interagency working group established by the bipartisan AAM Coordination and Leadership Act (P.L. 117-203) are likely forthcoming and represent a whole-of-government approach to integration and adoption of AAM. Our membership strongly supports this effort and hopes Congress will keep the Administration focused on the timely delivery of this report and its recommendations.

In a similar fashion, we also encourage consideration of the recommendations of the congressionally created Aerospace Supply Chain Resiliency Task Force to support supply chain stability and industry growth and competitiveness. This remains a challenge for our membership, and commerce, and is critical to address for the health and vitality of the international aviation marketplace.

IMPORTANT VECTOR CHECK

On behalf of the membership of the GAMA, thank you for the role this committee and its leadership played in facilitating consideration and passage of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. The steady hand and strong leadership of all involved to achieve this important milestone is to be commended and is deeply meaningful to the aviation sector and broader U.S. economy and commerce.

As we move forward, hearings and congressional oversight will continue to serve an important purpose—to highlight where there is success, where work remains, where focus needs to be placed, and where there are unanticipated challenges. It also serves as a compelling reminder to stay focused on implementation of this law especially during this time of transition. For this reason, thank you for the opportunity to provide a vector check for the FAA, industry, policymakers, and those who

benefit from the robust aviation sector the U.S. is fortunate to have and must maintain. The fruits of your FAA Reauthorization labor have already been successful but there is work ahead to ensure that your vision can be more fully achieved, and the law's important direction becomes reality.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you, Mr. Bunce. I appreciate it.

Next, we are going to go to Mr. Regan. You are now recognized for 5 minutes.

TESTIMONY OF GREG REGAN, PRESIDENT, TRANSPORTATION TRADES DEPARTMENT, AFL-CIO (TTD)

Mr. REGAN. Thank you, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Cohen, and other members of the committee. On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO, and our 37 affiliated unions, I want to thank you all for this opportunity to testify on this important legislation.

As the largest transportation labor federation in the country representing hundreds of thousands of aviation workers, we are confident that proper implementation of this bipartisan bill will strengthen aviation safety standards, sustainably grow our skilled workforce, and enhance the quality of service that travelers deserve.

A number of significant aviation labor parties are codified in this bill, including protections for airline employees against assaults, efforts to close existing safety gaps, and provisions to address the shortage of air traffic controllers. Now these provisions must be implemented quickly and accurately. Airline workers, including flight attendants, gate agents, pilots, and other personnel, face an alarming increase in workplace assaults and have reported unprecedented levels of verbal abuse, threats, physical violence since the pandemic.

It is encouraging to see Congress take meaningful steps to address this situation through a number of provisions in the 2024 FAA reauthorization. A key measure includes setting minimum standards for self-defense training for front-line workers empowering them to protect themselves.

From the ramp to the radar room, aviation professionals ensure the safety and reliability of American air travel through their dedication, training, and expertise. This bill specifies several ways in which working conditions can and should be improved, including addressing airport ramp worker safety concerns, initiating studies in cabin air safety and radiation exposure, and promulgating lactation standards for pilots and flight attendants.

This legislation also addresses a critical safety gap on the global scale. It mandates essential safety improvements for global aircraft maintenance by requiring annual unannounced inspections at foreign repair stations and establishing minimum qualifications for mechanics working on U.S. aircraft.

While the 2024 reauthorization includes many important safety actions, there are long overdue safety measures like this one from previous reauthorizations. One of the most troubling remaining loopholes in the regulation of aircraft maintenance is the disparity between drug and alcohol testing for workers at domestic mainte-

nance facilities, and for those at foreign facilities who are exempt from this requirement.

The 2012 reauthorization directed the FAA to issue a proposed rule requiring all repair station employees responsible for safety-sensitive maintenance on U.S. aircraft to be subject to an alcohol and controlled substance testing program within 1 year. The FAA did not issue the proposed rule until last year. That is a solid 13 years later. And has yet to be finalized. It is unacceptable that it has taken over a decade for the FAA to implement a congressionally mandated safety measure.

In the 2018 reauthorization, Congress passed a statute requiring the FAA to issue a rule that all new aircraft for delivery to passenger air carriers have installed physical secondary barriers within 1 year.

Five years later, in June of 2023, the FAA finally issued a long-awaited final rule to mandate the installation of secondary barriers in all newly manufactured aircraft within 2 years. I urge you all to exercise your oversight authority to ensure the FAA takes a swifter approach to implementing the 2024 reauthorization than they did in some of the previous versions.

In addition to safety, staffing shortages have also been a major concern for some of our Nation's aviation workforce. Air traffic controllers keep our skies safe as they efficiently move thousands of aircraft every day throughout the National Airspace System. Yet, a decade of insufficient hiring has created a pressing staffing crisis among certified professional controllers leaving our controller workforce severely strained.

To address this problem, this law directs the FAA to set a stronger minimum hiring target for new controllers and similarly, the legislation directs the FAA to conduct a comprehensive review and as necessary, revise the FAA staffing model for aviation safety inspectors.

Airport service workers from baggage handlers to wheelchair agents to cabin cleaners form the backbone of daily aviation operations. Yet their vital contributions remain undervalued and underprotected. This legislation requires the GAO to complete a comprehensive review of the domestic airport service workforce, reinforcing the importance of treating all segments of the aviation workforce as integral to the industry's success.

From its very outset, the history of aviation has been written in hard-earned lessons shaped by a sober in reality. It can take a tragedy to reveal an unknown engineering flaw or systemic vulnerability in established protocols. But it is also a tragedy when solutions to safety challenges, like mandating flight deck barriers, or greater foreign repair station oversight, languish for decades after Congress requires them.

When a regulatory directive mandating FAA action within 12 to 18 months stretches to 12 to 18 years on an implementation timeline, it should be equally unacceptable.

For ramp workers facing jet blast hazards, for the airline crew managing cabin air quality concerns, and for every aviation safety professional who ensures our system runs smoothly and safely, implementation of this bill must happen now.

We were proud to endorse this bill. We are proud to be in an industry where we can develop these bipartisan solutions and move our industry collectively better for workers and for participants, and I look forward to seeing the fruits of your labor when this bill is finally implemented. Thank you.

[Mr. Regan's prepared statement follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Greg Regan, President, Transportation Trades
Department, AFL-CIO (TTD)**

On behalf of the Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO (TTD), and our 37 affiliated unions representing hundreds of thousands of aviation professionals, I thank Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Cohen for inviting me to testify on the implementation of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2024.

As the largest transportation labor federation in the country, representing hundreds of thousands of aviation workers, we are invested in ensuring a robust, modern, and successful FAA. We are confident that proper implementation of the bipartisan 2024 FAA reauthorization legislation will strengthen aviation safety standards, sustainably grow our skilled workforce, and enhance the quality of service that travelers deserve.

The aviation workers represented by TTD-affiliated unions maintain the highest safety standards in global aviation through their dedication and expertise. Swift and precise implementation of this legislation will strengthen their ability to meet evolving challenges by providing essential tools, resources, and protections that directly support their safety-critical work. These members have witnessed firsthand how underinvestment in critical infrastructure, inadequate FAA staffing levels, and outdated safety protocols directly compromise both worker and public safety. They understand firsthand the risks these issues pose to the safety and efficiency of the aviation system. Expedient implementation of this legislation will not only safeguard the well-being of aviation workers but also ensure that the United States continues to set the global standard for aviation safety and reliability. Empowering these dedicated professionals is essential to maintaining public trust and advancing the future of air travel.

This FAA bill enhances safety standards, works to ensure sustainable growth of the federal aviation workforce, facilitates improvements to infrastructure and service, rejects any policy changes to pilot training, qualification and retirement age, and ensures the current, correctly tailored balance regarding the Airline Deregulation Act's focus on consumer-facing matters. We were proud to work closely with Congress on a pro-worker, pro-safety bill that will positively impact the aviation industry for decades to come. TTD and our affiliate unions were glad to see a number of critical priorities codified in this legislation, including provisions to address the shortage of air traffic controllers, protections for airline employees against assaults, and efforts to close existing safety gaps. Now, it is critical that the provisions enumerated below are implemented quickly and accurately.

Delaying implementation of these safety-critical provisions creates dangerous regulatory gaps that directly impact frontline workers while increasing the risk of preventable accidents and disruptions. This inaction puts both safety and economic stability at risk, threatening the foundation of an industry that is essential to our national transportation network and economic prosperity.

GLOBAL AVIATION ISSUES

One of the most glaring and troubling loopholes in the regulation of aircraft maintenance is that workers at domestic facilities must undergo extensive drug and alcohol testing while foreign mechanics working on U.S. aircraft are exempt from this requirement. To address this core safety issue, the 2012 FAA Reauthorization bill directed the FAA, within one year, to issue a proposed rule requiring all repair station employees responsible for safety-sensitive maintenance on U.S. aircraft to be subject to an alcohol and controlled substance testing program. While the FAA issued an Advance Notice of Proposed Rulemaking (ANPRM) on drug and alcohol testing in 2014, no further action occurred until last year, a decade later. While the required rule is expected to be finalized by the end of this year, decade-long delays in implementing congressionally-mandated safety measures represent an unacceptable risk to aviation safety and workers' well-being.

Similarly, this legislation mandates critical safety improvements for global aircraft maintenance, requiring annual unannounced inspections at foreign repair stations and establishing minimum qualifications for mechanics working on United States-registered aircraft. These standards address longstanding disparities between domestic and foreign maintenance requirements and ensure the safety of our aircraft, regardless of where the maintenance occurs. Requiring annual unannounced inspections of foreign repair stations helps ensure these facilities adhere to the same rigorous safety standards as domestic repair stations, preventing lapses in oversight. Establishing minimum qualifications for mechanics and other workers ensures that only highly trained professionals handle critical maintenance tasks, safeguarding the integrity of U.S. aviation operations.

The 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act imposes critical limits on foreign interchange agreements to ensure competitive fairness in the U.S. airline industry. Currently, foreign interchanges can be of indefinite duration according to the FAA. In the past, the duration of interchange agreements would last a few days, but now can last for a year or more. As a result for example, a Canadian-registered carrier is taking advantage of the absence of hard limits for interchange agreements. The FAA must remedy this by promulgating a rule establishing limitations on interchange agreements, minimum breaks between renewals, and a limit for no more than one agreement between airlines.

ASSAULT PREVENTION

Airline workers, including flight attendants, gate agents and other personnel, face an alarming increase in workplace assaults and have reported unprecedented levels of verbal abuse, threats, and physical violence since the COVID-19 pandemic. TTD and our affiliate unions were encouraged to see Congress take meaningful steps to address this situation through a number of provisions included in the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act.

Key measures aimed at mitigating this unacceptable reality include setting minimum standards for self-defense training for flight attendants and pilots, empowering them to protect themselves and de-escalate conflicts in high-stress situations. Additionally, the requirement for passenger-carrying air carriers to submit Employee Assault Prevention and Response Plans to the FAA will ensure that airlines implement proactive and comprehensive strategies to address and mitigate these incidents. Importantly, the legislation clarifies that federal protections against interference with security personnel extend to airline employees performing critical ground functions such as ticketing, check-in, baggage claim, and boarding.

These provisions mark a significant step forward in safeguarding aviation workers, reinforcing their vital role in the aviation system, while also ensuring a safer environment for both employees and passengers.

STAFFING

Air traffic controllers keep our skies safe as they efficiently move thousands of aircraft every day throughout the National Airspace System (NAS). Their professional standards are rigorous: new hires undergo extensive training for at least 18 to 36 months depending on their facility assignment. Controllers worked throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, and without their ongoing efforts, air travel could not have rebounded as quickly as we have seen in recent months.

A decade of insufficient hiring has created a critical staffing crisis among certified professional controllers (CPCs), leaving our air traffic control workforce severely strained. Today's workforce of CPCs has declined by 1,000 positions compared to 10 years ago, forcing many controllers to work six-day, 10-hour weeks just to keep our airspace safe. There are 1,000 fewer CPCs today than 10 years ago, and over 10 percent of the CPC workforce is eligible to retire. This has led to staffing shortages at certain facilities and some controllers working six days per week.

Importantly, this legislation directs the FAA to set as the minimum hiring target for new air traffic controllers for each of fiscal years 2024 through 2028 the maximum number of individuals trained at the FAA Air Traffic Control Academy. The bill also requires the FAA to revise its staffing standards to adopt the best staffing model identified by the Transportation Research Board (TRB) and allows the FAA to implement any necessary TRB recommendations. Similarly, the bill directs the FAA to conduct a comprehensive review and, as necessary, revise the FAA's staffing model for aviation safety inspectors. The FAA is further authorized to address staffing challenges revealed by this analysis.

In addition to air traffic controllers, airport service workers are another essential component of the aviation system. Airport service workers, from baggage handlers to wheelchair agents to cabin cleaners, form the backbone of daily aviation oper-

ations, yet their critical contributions remain undervalued and under-protected. This bill requires the Government Accountability Office (GAO) to complete a comprehensive review of the domestic airport service workforce and examine the role and importance of this workforce to the aviation economy. Such a review can provide valuable insights into the working conditions, wages, training, and career opportunities of airport service workers, many of whom operate in demanding environments with minimal job security. Highlighting their contributions and needs can pave the way for improved labor standards, fair compensation, and better working conditions. Moreover, it reinforces the importance of treating all segments of the aviation workforce as integral to the industry's success, ensuring these workers are no longer invisible but recognized and valued for their essential contributions.

WORKING CONDITIONS

The safety and reliability of our aviation system depend entirely on the skilled professionals who operate it, from the ramp to the radar room. These aviation professionals ensure the safety and reliability of American air travel through their dedication, training, and expertise. Ensuring their working conditions match their critical responsibilities, that they are fair, safe, and supportive benefits both the workforce and the traveling public. The 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act specifies a number of ways in which working conditions for employees across the industry can and should be improved.

For example, airport ramp workers face significant hazards such as jet blasts, engine ingestion, tire explosions, and other vehicular accidents, often with limited protection. By initiating a comprehensive review and providing targeted training, as required by this bill, the FAA will address critical safety gaps and empower workers with the knowledge and tools needed to prevent accidents. The inclusion of hazard training for all relevant employees ensures a unified, well-informed workforce that can effectively respond to potential dangers.

The legislation also addresses two critical worker health concerns: cabin air safety and radiation exposure. It directs the FAA to develop a standardized system for flight attendants, pilots, and aircraft maintenance technicians of air carriers to voluntarily report fume and smoke events promulgating a rule, where appropriate, on training, standardized reporting, and investigative procedure for oil and hydraulic events, and the installation of AQ monitoring equipment.

Additionally, the bill directs the DOT to enter into an agreement with the National Academies to conduct a study on radiation exposure to crewmembers onboard various aircraft types operated under Part 121.

Finally, the bill stipulates that the FAA must issue, at a minimum, guidance for lactation standards and rights for flight attendants and pilots to pump safely during flight. This provision is a meaningful step forward for working parents as it will facilitate balance between professional responsibilities and caregiving needs, promote better retention and job satisfaction, and set a precedent for workplace rights and support.

SAFETY PROVISIONS

While safety underlies every provision of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act, several critical safety measures demand immediate implementation attention.

In the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, Congress passed a statute requiring, at a minimum, the FAA to issue a rule that all new aircraft for delivery to passenger air carriers have Installed Physical Secondary Barriers (IPSB) within one year. However, no meaningful action was taken to implement the rule until nearly five years after enacting the Saracini Aviation Safety Act of 2018 (i.e., Section 336 of P.L. 115-254). Finally, in June 2023, the FAA issued a long-awaited final rule to mandate the installation of secondary barriers on all newly manufactured aircraft within two years. Following the passage of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act, FAA should not only implement the Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) for secondary flight deck doors but also mandate through a final rule, secondary barriers on all flight deck doors not covered by the 2018 FAA Bill and attendant regulatory mandate. This would ensure all aircraft, including those that require a retrofit, have secondary flight deck barriers for passenger aircraft under FAR Part 121.

The 2024 reauthorization also makes improvements in tackling long-standing impediments for addressing mental health for pilots and controllers. The bill sets up a working group to review the FAA's medical processes for certification of pilots, the special issuance process, and mental health and medication protocol, with the intent to make recommendations for reforms. Section 411 includes requirements for the task group to monitor and evaluate implementation of the consensus Mental Health and Aviation Rulemaking Committee. While we are pleased with the Committee's

work, we believe the FAA must do more to implement the ARC recommendations. As for implementation, we have major concerns that the FAA misinterpreting Section 801 of the reauthorization bill to significantly alter the deferral process for pilot medical certificates that require additional information for an FAA decision. This week the Office of Aerospace Medicine announced they intend to deny any applicant requiring additional information for certification, invalidating their medical and grounding pilots unnecessarily. These denials will have a chilling effect and introduce unintended consequences for those already under an initial denial. We believe this interpretation is incorrect, inconstant with the spirit and legislative history of the Act that was focused on accident and incident investigations and requires a stay of implementation and wholesale reinterpretation.

The bill also addresses modernization and improvements to aircraft evacuation by requiring the FAA to conduct a study on improvements to the safety and efficiency of evacuation standards for manufacturers and carriers of transport category airplanes, among many other important provisions.

CONCLUSION

From its very outset, the history of aviation safety has been written in hard-earned lessons shaped by a sobering reality: it can take a tragedy to reveal an unknown engineering flaw or a systemic vulnerability in established protocols. But it is also a tragedy when well-understood solutions to well-documented safety challenges—like mandating flight deck barriers or greater foreign repair station oversight—languish for decades in some cases after Congress required them. It is workers, travelers onboard flights, and the public on the ground below them who risk paying the true cost of federal inaction. Delayed action like those discussed in my testimony are unacceptable to both the professionals who make up our aviation workforce and the traveling public they serve. When a regulatory directive mandating FAA action within 12 to 18 months stretches into a 12- to 18-year implementation timeline, it should be equally unacceptable to each of you.

The 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act provides tools to address a number of risks that impact the lives of workers in this industry, but tools only matter if they're used. For the ramp worker facing jet blast hazards, for the airline crew managing cabin air quality concerns, for every aviation professional who ensures our system runs safely and smoothly—implementation must happen now. The workers our federation represents have always set the global standard for aviation excellence. It's time for the FAA to meet that standard with swift, decisive action to protect the workers who keep America flying.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you. With that, we are going to go to questions, and I am going to start with a senior member of the committee, subcommittee Chairman Crawford from Arkansas, for 5 minutes.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Let me ask, if I might begin by unanimous consent to enter into the record the score from the Sunday game with Ranking Member Cohen's Memphis Tigers versus Arkansas State University. I didn't think it was supposed to go that way, Mr. Ranking Member, but 85-72, I believe.

Mr. COHEN. We were generous.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Right. Thank you for that. Anyway, appreciate it. Back to business. We try to have fun here as much as we can.

Mr. Woodworth, I am always concerned about how other countries are competing against our domestic industries in areas like drones, which you obviously have a lot of expertise in. And one of the recurring themes in this hearing has been rulemaking with regard to FAA and the delays associated with that. It has been terribly delayed. Can you tell me what effects the FAA's delay in issuing the rule has had on your domestic drone industry? I am especially concerned about workforce development and manufacturing and how we are falling behind with competitors from countries like China and other adversaries.

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, thank you for the question, Congressman. Yes, I think that the perfect example is sort of where I was a year and a half ago when I was before this committee talking about, sort of, how we were stuck. Our operations in the United States were very limited. We had a handful of sites, and most of our operations were happening overseas, because that was where, sort of, the regulatory environment allowed for the operations to occur. That is largely due to, sort of, having existed in this space of an exemption-based set of approvals, so, rather than having rules that you can operate by, sort of everything was going to the agency and asking for exemptions.

That is a long process. That is an unpredictable process. And the unpredictable timelines for us as a business meant that, like, we had to go show progress somewhere else.

Thankfully, due to the oversight that this committee has placed on the FAA over the last year and a half, we have seen significant advances in both the, sort of, speed and predictability of that process. And I think that, sort of, the next touchpoint to check on that will be getting the BVLOS notice of proposed rule published so that industry and other stakeholders can look at it and see if it does match the intent that you all put into the bill.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Just as a followup, do you have any recommendations for how we can ensure the FAA meets the deadline?

Mr. WOODWORTH. I think a big element of it is making sure that that process doesn't get stuck, so, the FAA will write the rule, and then it goes into the interagency processes, then it comes out for public comment, ensuring that there is, sort of, the appropriate pressures on, like, let's advance the process, get the rule out so that people can comment on it, and then adjudicate those comments in a timely manner.

You know, it is hard to study for a test when you don't know what, sort of, the subject is going to be, and so, we look forward to seeing what that rule looks like.

Mr. CRAWFORD. Excellent. Thank you. I appreciate your comments, and I appreciate all you all being here today. Before I yield the balance of my time, I do want to add my name to the list of well-wishers to our chairman, our illustrious chairman, Garret Graves. It has been an honor to serve with you, and obviously wish you all the best in every endeavor.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Thanks.

You ready to go [to Mr. Cohen]?

Mr. COHEN. Yes.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. I recognize the gentleman from Tennessee, ranking member of the subcommittee, Mr. Cohen, for 5 minutes.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Regan, I would like to ask you a few questions. FAA currently has a 90-second evacuation standard for commercial aircraft, but that standard is based on an unrealistic study, terribly unrealistic. The EVAC Act, which was included in the reauthorization bill, requires a new study to consider passengers with disabilities, airplanes with young and old passengers as well, animals on the plane, carry-on baggage, and other factors of realistic flights when

evaluating how seat size and configuration could impact evacuations. How important, Mr. Regan, is it that the FAA implement this provision as soon as possible? And what are the consequences for your members if the FAA does not get this right?

Mr. REGAN. Thank you for the question. I mean, I think it is critical that they implement this requirement. I mean, you are talking about, in many cases, aircraft that have been redesigned. You've had different seating arrangements. And we're talking about the process and requirements when there is a crisis. And if there is a crisis where you have to evacuate the aircraft, the entire flightcrew, the pilots, the flight attendants, the people on the ground, first responders who are going to be responding, need to have accurate information for how to evacuate an aircraft safely and efficiently, and try to avert the worst consequences when there is a disaster. So, I think this is a really important update to our regulations that should be implemented right away.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, sir. After public outrage over the treatment of passengers with disabilities and their mobility aids, such as wheelchairs, I introduced legislation to require the Department of Transportation to evaluate complaints about passengers with disabilities. This was included in the FAA reauthorization law.

Mr. Regan, how much training do your airport service workers receive on how to appropriately assist passengers with disabilities, including both helping them on and off the aircraft and around the airport, as well as how to handle mobility aids, and what additional tools and guidance are needed from the Department of Transportation to ensure your members can meet the new requirements for handling passengers with disabilities?

Mr. REGAN. Well, I think one of the things that is often overlooked about those workers who play that critical role at airports in terms of boarding and deplaning, most of them are not employed directly by the airlines themselves. Most of them are out of subcontractors that are employing those—all of those important parts of the job. And in most cases, these are the lowest paid people in the entire industry. And that is something that the GAO study that was included in the bill is hoping to start to address, to bring up standards across the board, because when you have a hodgepodge of different contractors providing it, the safety training standards that you are referring to are oftentimes different depending on who the actual employer is and what their standards are.

So, I do think, A, raising the standard of living for the workers who are doing those jobs, but also having standardization across the industry for what training priorities are necessary, and how they can do this job most effectively to comply with Federal disability laws is a really important priority for this committee.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, sir. I also had a provision that requires commercial aircraft on long overwater routes that black-box technology that allows investigators to recover the flight data cockpit voice recordings without searching the floor. Can you discuss the importance of having modern accident investigation technology that do not require underwater retrieval of the black boxes?

Mr. REGAN. Yes. I mean, again, we're talking about the unfortunate scenarios when something awful happens. I assure you if my friend, Jennifer Homendy, the Chair of the NTSB were here, she

would have extremely extensive knowledge about what difficulties they face in terms of properly identifying what caused an accident, and certainly, access to the best data is really important for that process.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, sir.

Mr. Bunce, the FAA reauthorization bill included numerous provisions to strengthen aviation workforce, including maximum hiring of air traffic controllers, review of staffing requirements for aviation safety inspectors, and workforce development programs for pilots, aviation maintenance, and aviation manufacturing. Have your members seen any progress on those provisions in the FAA reauthorization bill?

Mr. BUNCE. Yes, Mr. Cohen. As we have watched the very positive pressure that this committee has put on the FAA, they really embrace the fact that they need to get their workforce out to our plants to do what we call knowledge sharing, and we don't call it training. We have an ability to go and get our technicians to sit together with the FAA technicians and teach them about the newest methodology and the technology that we incorporate into the industry, and it really does help.

As I mentioned earlier, these young people are coming straight out of college, and the antiquated way that we do a lot of the things with the FAA now, we still use paper. These kids are very used to operating and manipulating 3D drawings with a computer rotating around, and everything, and so, this knowledge sharing also helps drive a change in the attitude in the FAA to embrace the new technology and the digitization that you all put into the bill to be able to go and let these young people use the skills that they have learned in college to properly regulate. And so, I really think what you have done in the workforce is put a light on what we need to do. And as I mentioned earlier, now getting these high school kids to have an opportunity to get excited about aerospace and all the opportunities there, these grants to be able to help high schools, but also our tech schools, be able to prepare our manufacturing workforce is the next element that we hope the appropriators will fund.

Mr. COHEN. Thank you. Before I yield back the time that I don't have, I would like to ask for unanimous consent to enter into the record a Transportation Workers Union of America paper on what their needs are with the FAA Reauthorization Act.

Mr. YAKYM [presiding]. Without objection.

[The information follows:]

Letter of December 10, 2024, to Hon. Sam Graves, Chairman, and Hon. Rick Larsen, Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, and Hon. Garret Graves, Chairman, and Hon. Steve Cohen, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Aviation, from Andre Sutton, Air Division Director, International Vice President, Transport Workers Union of America, Submitted for the Record by Hon. Steve Cohen

DECEMBER 10, 2024.

The Honorable SAM GRAVES,
Chair,
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515.

The Honorable RICK LARSEN,
Ranking Member,
Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S. House of Representatives,
Washington, DC 20515.

The Honorable GARRET GRAVES,
Chair,
Subcommittee on Aviation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S.
House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

The Honorable STEVE COHEN,
Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Aviation, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure, U.S.
House of Representatives, Washington, DC 20515.

DEAR CHAIR GRAVES, RANKING MEMBER LARSEN, CHAIR GRAVES, AND RANKING MEMBER COHEN,

On behalf of more than 155,000 members of the Transport Workers Union of America (TWU), I am writing to thank you for your work on the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 and to share the implementation status of several essential provisions all of us worked hard to win in statute. TWU flight attendants, ground workers, mechanics, dispatchers, and other airline workers are anxiously awaiting progress on these issues.

The TWU was proud to work with this Committee on a strong, bipartisan FAA Reauthorization of 2024 that acknowledges the essential work our members perform to ensure the United States retains its gold standard in aviation safety. Throughout the final bill, the Committee attempted to reform not only the FAA's policies but its processes to force the agency to be more responsive to its statutory requirements. We hope that the committee will increase its scrutiny of the FAA and force the agency to meet its obligations in a timelier manner.

A full list of the overdue provisions important to our membership is included below. Most urgently, the FAA seems intent to ignore deadlines related to reshoring aircraft maintenance work, preventing assaults within our air system, and updating ramp worker safety.

Reshoring aircraft maintenance (Sec. 302) is essential to ensuring we truly have one level of safety across the U.S.-flagged fleet. Longstanding regulatory loopholes at the FAA allow facilities the agency certifies outside of the U.S. to ignore safety rules regarding drug and alcohol testing, background checks, minimum qualifications for aircraft maintenance technicians, and random inspections. Congress has twice previously directed the FAA to close some of these loopholes (in 2012 and 2016); the FAA is now more than a decade overdue for any action on this issue and if history is any indication, will likely miss yet another deadline to correct this.

Assaults in our air system remain far too high. Gate agents, flight attendants, and other public-facing workers continue to face increased violence on the job with little recourse possible. Ensuring workers are trained is critical to their safety. The FAA must convene a task force to develop voluntary standards and best practices, including for flight crew and cabin crew response (Sec. 432). Additionally, the FAA is now past due to begin actions to incorporate into pre-takeoff announcements a statement informing passengers of federal law prohibiting interference with the duties of a crewmember.

Ramp worker safety was highlighted in the year preceding adoption of the FAA reauthorization when four workers died on the job from safety failures. The FAA has *never* reviewed or revised its ground worker safety rules—a task the agency was directed to begin no later than November 12, 2024 (Sec. 353). The delay in this process is putting more and more ground workers at risk as workers in an increasingly complicated, congested environment face poor regulatory compliance even under the existing, lax safety rules.

As this Committee continues to fulfill its crucial oversight duties of the FAA, we respectfully request that you ensure these provisions of the FAA Reauthorization of 2024 are properly implemented as soon as possible. The safety and well-being of our members, as well as the safety of the traveling public, depend on the full implementation of this pro-worker, pro-safety law. The TWU looks forward to continuing to work with this Committee to advance strong policies that benefit TWU members.

Sincerely,

ANDRE SUTTON,
*Air Division Director, International Vice President,
Transport Workers Union of America.*

Issue	Section(s)	Deadline	Status
Drug & alcohol testing at FAA-certified repair facilities outside the U.S.	Sec. 302(b)	11/16/2025	NPRM closed in April 2024; final rule still pending at OMB.
Background checks for safety sensitive workers at FAA-certified repair facilities outside the U.S. rule-making.	Sec. 302(b)(2)	No deadline.	
Minimum AMT qualifications at FAA-certified repair facilities outside the U.S.	Sec. 302(a)	11/16/2025.	
Random inspections at FAA-certified repair facilities outside the U.S.	Sec. 302(a)	No deadline.	
Ramp safety call to action	Sec. 353	11/12/2024	Past due.
Prohibition of remote dispatching	Sec. 420(a)(2)	5/16/2025.	
AIR PUMP	Sec. 421	11/12/2024	Past due.
Report on safe uniforms	Sec. 409	5/16/2026.	
Deterring crewmember interference announcement.	Sec. 432(b)	8/14/2024	Past due.
DOT request National Academies study on radiation exposure.	Sec. 322	9/13/2024	Past due.
Study on cabin temperatures	Sec. 323	5/16/2026.	
ARC on installation of secondary barriers.	Sec. 350	11/16/2024	Established October 2024.
Bleed air study (FAA 2018 requirement).	Sec. 362(a)	11/16/2024	Past due.
Fume event reporting system	Sec. 362(b)	11/12/2024	Past due.
Study on evacuation standards	Sec. 365	5/16/2025.	
Passenger aircraft first aid and emergency medical kit equipment and training NPRM.	Sec. 368	5/16/2026.	

Issue	Section(s)	Deadline	Status
Improved training standards for assisting passengers who use wheelchairs NPRM.	Sec. 542	11/16/2024	NPRM closed in June 2024; final rule still pending at OMB (due by 5/16/25).
Training standards for stowage of wheelchairs and scooters NPRM.	Sec. 543	11/16/2024	NPRM closed in June 2024; final rule still pending at OMB (due by 5/16/25).

Mr. COHEN. Thank you, and I yield back that time.

Mr. YAKYM. Thank you. And I now recognize myself for 5 minutes. I want to start with a few words of thanks to our outgoing subcommittee chair, Garret Graves. He has been a good friend of mine, someone who has mentored me in this House. We will certainly miss your leadership, your quick wit, your energy, and I may also say that I have described to not only people on this committee, but other people in the House that, Mr. Chairman, I have referred to you often as my aspirational peer on policy. You really do understand what it is we do on this committee, and your thoughtful leadership has left the T&I Committee and even more specifically the Aviation Subcommittee in very good shape going forward. I know I join my colleagues in wishing you all the best in your next endeavor.

I also want to thank our witnesses for being here, and if you look at everything that we have accomplished here through the FAA reauthorization bill, we have a lot of work ahead of us in terms of implementation.

Mr. Woodworth, I want to ask you about the beyond visual line of sight rules or BVLOS rule for unmanned aerial aircraft systems. As you know, section 930 of the FAA Reauthorization Act directed the FAA to publish a notice of proposed rulemaking on BVLOS by September 16, 2024. Unfortunately, nearly 2 months past that deadline, we still have no notice of proposed rulemaking. Can you talk about the importance of getting this NPRM out as soon as possible?

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes. Thank you for the question. I think it is critically important, namely because of the progress that we have experienced over the last year and a half. So, a lot of that is still based on exemptions. It is still based on, sort of, like, one of approvals. It is not sort of—it is not a programmatic and rule-based approach, so, having a rule would solidify that progress.

I think that the risk that we are facing right now is that we could very easily recede on the gains that have been made over the last year and a half. We can't comment on a rule until the rule is out. We don't know what the rule will look like. We don't know if it maps to, sort of, the guidance that you all put into the Reauthorization Act, and so, the sort of critical next step in rulemaking is to see that in the Federal Register, so that we can continue to move forward as an industry.

Mr. YAKYM. Thank you for that answer, and I really do hope that the FAA and the Department of Transportation can act very soon to give you the certainty that you need and deserve. Mr. Woodworth, sticking with you, if we want to enter a new market,

do you have to conduct a new environmental assessment? Is that correct?

Mr. WOODWORTH. At the moment, yes. This has been one of the, sort of, longest lead and most unpredictable items that we have in our plans to continue operational scale. When we first started, it was literally if you were in one parking lot and you wanted to move across the street to another parking lot, you had to re-go through the process, and that could be 6, 9, 12 months. Very unpredictable.

We have seen progress on that. The FAA did that for all of the DFW area. So, the, sort of, the whole metroplex as one assessment. And then they have done one for all of North Carolina. So, I think the, sort of, next logical step in that would be to do a nationwide approach. All of these assessments are coming back with, sort of, no substantial findings, so, I think it would be pragmatic to move forward a national approach.

Mr. YAKYM. And very briefly, every time you do one of these environmental assessments, roughly how much does that cost?

Mr. WOODWORTH. I do not have the, sort of, dollar figures available, but it is a significant time investment, and it provides a significant amount of uncertainty in our plans to expand.

Mr. YAKYM. Thank you. Switching gears with the time I have left to Mr. Bunce, I appreciated your testimony highlighting how technology can improve the aviation sector. If there is any pilot program for the mobility of clearances, which I advocated for along with several of my colleagues on this committee, can you talk about how this pilot program mobile clearance delivery will advance in technology and how the FAA is doing in terms of implementation so far?

Mr. BUNCE. Yes, sir. When we try to take off in congested airspace, what we call either class B or class C airspace, you need to get a clearance to be able to enter into that airspace. So, what you do now is you either use the radios, but think about an advanced air mobility aircraft that is not in the line of sight for the radio. So, they are going to have to call on the phone, talk to the controller. The controller then tells them, you can launch and here's your launch window. It is generally about 2 minutes, and you have to be airborne during that time.

So, think about how inefficient that is, and if the controller is busy, that aircraft may be sitting there waiting to take off for a long period of time versus an electronic signal that is just—they can look on their mobile devices and be able to say, okay, here is your takeoff clearance, here is your time. It is going to expedite this tremendously.

We are trying to push the FAA and the air traffic control organization to tell us where we are going to put those five test sites, and we definitely want to have input in where we are going to operate to start this process with advanced air mobility.

Mr. YAKYM. Thank you. The Chair now recognizes the ranking member of the full committee, Mr. Larsen, for 5 minutes.

Mr. LARSEN OF WASHINGTON. Thanks, Mr. Chair. Mr. Chairman, I yield my time to Mr. Johnson of Georgia.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. I thank the ranking member of the full committee. And I want to thank Chairman Garret Graves and also Ranking Member Cohen for convening this important hearing.

I also extend my gratitude to the gentlemen on the panel for your very wise testimony today.

One of my proudest moments of the 118th Congress was the passage of the bipartisan, bicameral Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization Act of 2024. This monumental achievement reaffirms the United States as a global leader in the aviation industry. This is just the beginning. Our task now is to ensure that the policies we fought for are executed with urgency and precision. The stakes are too high because more than 20,000 airports and over 1 million aviation workers across the United States depend on us.

Airports like Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Georgia, one of the busiest in the country, are waiting for these changes to enhance safety, efficiency, and the passenger experience for millions every day. We owe it to every worker in this industry and every passenger flying our skies to ensure that these reforms are not just promised but delivered.

I am proud to have worked on this law, and I look forward to collaborating with my colleagues, stakeholders, and the entire aviation community to ensure its successful implementation.

Mr. Terreri, the 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act directs the FAA and the Department of Energy to lead research and development for the safe use of hydrogen in civil aviation. This involves creating a strategy for hydrogen-powered aircraft, developing certification standards, and coordinating with various stakeholders.

The goal is to ensure general aviation aircraft can transition away from leaded fuels by 2030. How can airports collaborate with the FAA in shaping these standards to ensure smooth implementation of hydrogen propulsion in aviation?

Mr. TERRERI. Thank you for the question. From an airport perspective, I think the question could probably be answered better by a colleague over general aviation. But real briefly from the airport perspective, once it is certified, once it is allowed an aircraft, that is when the airport would have to deal with storing at the airport or having it on site. But other than the implementation certification, that is not something that the airport would really be involved in.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. All right. Thank you.

Mr. Bunce, would you care to respond?

Mr. BUNCE. Yes, sir, one of our advanced air mobility companies have just demonstrated using liquid hydrogen which you have to cool. It comes in a liquid form, but they put basically a pod underneath the vehicle and extended the range tremendously. Now, we don't have the infrastructure to deliver that to all the airports, but virtually all of our companies are looking at the potential for hydrogen whether you go and you convert that hydrogen through a fuel cell to electricity to operate electric motors or you actually burn that hydrogen up at altitudes like you would petroleum-based fuel. So, there is tremendous potential there. There are also a lot of technical challenges of being able to cool it to a level that you can keep it in that liquid form, because it boils off. But we have done it before, and we are very excited about the potential of the technology.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. Thank you.

Mr. Regan, mental health is often stigmatized in high-stress professions like aviation. The 2024 FAA Reauthorization Act acknowledges the importance of mental health, mandating the FAA to update its aeromedical protocols and establish a mental health task group to support aviation professionals. What steps do you think the FAA and aviation companies should take to reduce the stigma and encourage aviation workers to seek mental health support without fear of judgment or negative repercussions?

Mr. REGAN. I appreciate the question. I think it starts really with ensuring that we treat it as an illness, like we do with any other condition that a pilot or a flight attendant or an air traffic controller would face. We need to be able to ensure that workers don't have to worry about losing their jobs, losing their pay, losing their livelihoods and careers because they are suffering from an illness. And that right there, that assurance that they are going to be able to seek treatment and move on with their lives and continue their careers, it is a really important component. Otherwise, if you have got that hanging over your head that you might have to find a new line of work if I seek the treatment that I know I need, you are not going to be able to get the right types of treatment for the people who need it moving forward.

Mr. JOHNSON OF GEORGIA. Thank you. And I yield back.

Mr. YAKYM. The Chair now recognizes Mr. Molinaro for 5 minutes.

Mr. MOLINARO. Thank you, Mr. Chair. I, too, want to extend my appreciation to subcommittee Chair Garret Graves. I find it much easier to compliment him now in his absence. But I wish to truly express my genuine appreciation for his leadership. I am truly grateful for his friendship and frankly America is better because Garret Graves has served this Congress in his community and district.

Mr. Regan, I want to start with you, if you don't mind. As you know, despite having the same certifications as U.S. facilities, Federal regulations have allowed foreign repair facilities to operate on lower safety standards, which of course as we know has incentivized offshoring airline maintenance jobs. Thankfully, section 302, which we were successful in including FAA reauthorization, begins to remedy those regulatory discrepancies by now requiring the FAA to issue long overdue final rule mandating the alcohol and drug testing of workers who maintain part 121 aircraft at foreign repair stations within 18 months of enactment. This rule was first mandated in the FAA reauthorization of 2012.

Late last year, the Biden administration issued a notice of proposed rulemaking. However, as you know, as of December 10, 2024, final rule has yet to be issued.

In addition to requiring the FAA to conduct unannounced annual inspections of foreign facilities, section 302 requires setting minimum qualifications for mechanics at these facilities within 18 months of enactment, as well as mandates a rulemaking requiring the security threat assessment of these workers.

Could you speak with some detail as to the importance of finally leveling this playing field in the inclusion of section 302 and FAA reauthorization?

Mr. REGAN. Yes. And thank you, most importantly, for your leadership on this issue. You have been, in your time here, a real advocate on behalf of hiring and increasing our standards for anybody who is doing work on U.S. aircraft. And if you look at just the standards that required for domestic aircraft maintenance professionals, I mean, you have background checks, drug and alcohol testing, there are higher training standards, certification standards across the board. And we implemented those because they make the system safer. And yet, with the hundreds of foreign repair stations across the country who work on U.S. aircraft, who get a FAA certification in order to do that work on U.S. aircraft, the standards are just far, far below. And that to me has always been perplexing: Why would we accept a different standard somewhere else when they are doing the same type of work and they are carrying the same U.S. passengers on our aircraft and the safety should be the same, held to the same standard?

In addition, it's a jobs issue. I mean, we have 20,000 fewer mechanics in the U.S. than we did in 2000. It is clear that this is a way to save costs. We should not be sacrificing safety at the same time and that is currently where we are at.

Mr. MOLINARO. Thank you, Mr. Regan. I obviously agree and appreciate working with you and your members.

Mr. Terreri, first thank you for your leadership of an important airport in upstate New York. In fact, I will be flying into Syracuse myself. But I wanted to—I only have a minute and a half, I wanted to get to at least one point. As you know, airlines of course have reduced service at many of the smaller airports, certainly throughout upstate New York, leaving many of our shared constituents in areas like Binghamton, Ithaca, in Columbia County, and of course, even in Syracuse, without convenience and convenient access.

Advanced air mobility certainly can play a role in solving this problem filling those regional gaps. And I know that Syracuse is on the cutting edge of this issue. With major investment coming your way, the demand is going to grow.

Your testimony mentions that the 2024 FAA reauthorization didn't include some of the more robust regulatory and statutory provisions needed to advance AAM. And so, based on your experience, can you talk briefly about what is needed from the FAA and Congress to fully enable AAM advancement?

Mr. TERRERI. Yes, and thank you for the question.

I think a focus on first getting the aircraft certified, right, getting them flying. And then having the standards to integrate them into the airspace. And as you look at what these vehicles are capable of doing today, the short distances it flies, advanced air mobility is a real solution to connect disconnected communities who have lost their air service. So, a focus on advancing that technology will help increase and speed up those communities that are losing their air service. Aircraft are getting larger, so, those communities are not going to be having as much service. Advanced air mobility is something that can solve that.

Mr. MOLINARO. I was very grateful to have a provision added to FAA reauthorization that does in fact expand the capacity to dedicate Federal resources to airports to expand AAM VTOL and eVTOL and frankly look forward to the advancement and hopeful

in the next administration a more streamlined and efficient process to expand the innovation, so, thanks very much.

And I yield back, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. YAKYM. Thank you, Mr. Molinaro.

The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from Indiana, Mr. Carson.

Mr. CARSON. Thank you, Chair, and fellow Hoosier and friend.

This question is for Mr. Regan. I was very pleased to see your written testimony that over a year ago, the FAA announced that they were starting the implementation of secondary cockpit barriers on new passenger aircraft. This is the requirement, as you know, sir, that I authored in the FAA Reauthorization Act in 2018. Labor groups have been some of the strongest advocates for these safety devices to keep the flight decks secure and to keep crew and passengers safe. Yet, implementation has been painfully slow, in fact, some suggest deliberately delayed by the industry. What is your assessment, sir, of implementation progress so far? And can you give us an idea of the percentage of implementation at this point? And what can our community do to basically speed things up and get secondary cockpit barriers installed on all new aircraft?

Mr. REGAN. Thank you for the question.

You are right, this has been way too slow on the implementation of the secondary barrier requirements. I mean, we are talking about the very last of “The 9/11 Commission Report” requirements to be implemented by Congress. And yet, when we passed that law in 2018, despite the very clear language about any newly manufactured aircraft should be equipped with secondary barriers, there was a whole bunch of hemming and hawing over what is “newly manufactured aircraft.”

Is it a new model? Is it just literally something coming off the line? I thought Congress was pretty clear: It is every newly manufactured aircraft. It doesn’t matter if it is a new model. That should be implemented fully. And furthermore, I mean, the standard should be extended also to cargo aircraft as well, which also a threat in that regard.

I can’t give you an exact percentage in terms of the amount that has been done. But I do think in terms of retrofitting and the work that was done in this legislation will strengthen that Federal requirement. But I do think it is incumbent upon Congress to hold them accountable to actually see through the letter of the law in terms of why this critical security measure is necessary.

Mr. CARSON. Thank you, sir.

This question is for everyone, this followup question. Air traffic controllers, safety inspectors, and transportation workers we all know perform amazing jobs, often so in very challenging circumstances in the towers, on the ground, and certainly in flight. So, first, I want to say thank you for your hard work and keeping our American skies the safest in the world quite frankly. The best in the world.

What are the most important provisions in the FAA bill, in your mind, that will be the most helpful to these workers and to keep our flights running very safely and on time? And lastly, is there one thing that is not in our bill that you believe should have been included?

Mr. TERRERI. All right, I will go ahead and start. From the airport perspective, the increase in funding in AIP. It allows us to increase critical infrastructure, it allows us to address safety issues at the airports, whether it be runway construction, right, whether it is any other kind of surface infrastructure development. So, having that additional funding for us is what we see is making the airport environment more safe.

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, I think from my perspective, it is getting a BVLOS rule out and published and enacted to help, sort of, advance the integration of new entrants into the airspace and provide a framework from which we can keep growing.

Mr. BUNCE. I think, Mr. Carson, from my perspective on a lot of the advisory committees that actually look at the NAS is not only in this reauthorization but in previous ones, there has been an ask from the Congress to give us a plan on how to optimize the facilities and take a close look at it. Of course, the fear is that any time that the FAA or DOT would come forward, you know, don't do it in my district, don't do it in my State. And so, there isn't really a mechanism by which the executive branch can actually try to execute and think they could ever get it through the legislative branch. And so, if I would say anything, it is that we all work together to figure out in this modern day of telecommunications, how many real centers do we need? How many TRACONS?

Where can we spend the money, but also where can we build the one of this century, wherever it is, to say let's capture the way we now communicate digitally and be able then to say, okay, based on that, how many do we really need and how many TRACONS? And I think that would help the FAA and DOT actually provide a plan forward.

Mr. REGAN. All right. Well, first of all, in terms of things that need to be implemented, I mean, the drug and alcohol testing for foreign repair station workers, I mean, that is an issue. Oversight of foreign repair stations is something I have been working on for the entirety of my 13 years at TTD. It would be nice to be able move that off the list if we get a good solid final rule that enhances the safety of our system.

But we also need to have a Federal workforce, including controllers and safety inspectors, that meet the growing demands of our systems, so, meeting our minimum hiring standards. The newly minted hiring standards for controllers is a really important priority and one that will actually improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our national system.

In terms of things that were not included that I would have liked to include: stronger standards for the contract workers. We are an industry that prides itself on being a bastion of middle class jobs, whether you are a pilot or a flight attendant or controller or ramp worker and you are protected by a union, you are going to be able to make a real—and raise a family and have a solid job that way. The workers that often get forgotten are those who are subcontracted out, whether it be the people making the food that is served on board the aircraft or the people cleaning the airports or whether it be the people doing ADA compliance, those workers need to have a higher standard for how they are performing in the industry, an industry that rightfully prides itself on providing middle class jobs.

Mr. CARSON. Thank you.

I yield back, Chairman.

Mr. FONG [presiding]. Thank you. I now recognize Mr. Van Drew for 5 minutes for questions.

Dr. VAN DREW. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Let me start by saying a few words about Garret Graves. It's been an honor to serve alongside him. He is a good man, he is smart, he is focused, he is energetic, he cares about what he does, and we will miss him. I want him to know as he looks over these videos of this hearing that we do appreciate him, that I wish him the very best, and that he has a great future. He's got a lot of good things he is going to do.

What I am going to speak about today is not what I thought I was going to speak about 1 week or 2 weeks ago, and I am going to be very blunt. We have a serious problem with our airspace. The recent sightings of unidentified drones in the State of New Jersey, my home State, is justifiably causing tremendous public concern. These drones are large, they are sophisticated. We don't know for sure who is controlling them. And the FAA's current capabilities cannot even locate them on radar. We have a hole in our monitoring systems, and we have a hole in our radar currently. And the truth is, whether people want to hear it or not, we are vulnerable.

Our Government has failed to effectively regulate our drone industry. And this is not an isolated incident or an isolated phenomenon. Unidentified drones are running across the country. And let me be blunt and again say it how it is: Foreign drone technology, particularly China, is a full decade—10 years—ahead of where we are. That is unacceptable in America. We are number one. We have always been number one, but we are not now. And they can take and they intend to take full advantage of our vulnerabilities.

I have learned for real that there is circumstantial evidence that there is an Iranian mothership off the east coast of the United States. And it is launching these drone incursions. They are from high, good sources, individuals who are reputable, individuals who speak with authority, unfortunately are concerned with identifying who they are at this point we are saying this, but it is true. It is unacceptable, and it is frightening, and our Government has to act.

I say this not only as a Member of Congress from the State of New Jersey, but I say this as someone who loves America, like we all do who are in this room. We must build a national drone infrastructure. We must control our airspace, and we must protect the American people. The unfortunate reality is that this current administration has allowed our Nation to fall behind the rest of the world, and that is unacceptable.

This Congress passed the FAA reauthorization to promote a strong and regulated drone industry. The bill included a mandate—we worked on this, my office, as did other offices. We did a lot on it to include a mandate for the FAA to develop rules—and you all know what this means—for beyond visual line of sight operations. It's a critical capability for the drone industry that we need to have, but it's only one of the many steps that we must take. We are already years behind the rule.

The reauthorization unequivocally directed the FAA to advance the rulemaking process. We gave them, as some of you know and this committee knows, until September 16, which is now 3 long months ago. But President Biden's office of management has again delayed its release.

Frankly, this is not the only area of technology that we have heard this about. They have failed to move from 5G to key safety technologies. Our Nation's innovation is being hampered by big, burgeoning, nonfunctional bureaucracy. We need a real cultural transformation at the FAA and our Government as a whole to come to a reality in dealing with this technology.

We need an organizational structure at the FAA that is bold, an organizational structure that is ambitious in advancing our American technology so that we are number one.

So, I would like to submit for the record a statement from Robert Rose, cofounder and CEO of Reliable Robotics. Chairman, I would like to submit this for the record. They are an advanced aviation safety technology company that has endorsed the proposals I put forward to reform the FAA.

This committee must work with our new President, President Trump, to make the United States of America the most dominant drone power in the world. We lead, we don't follow. That is America. This is about our safety. It is about our national security.

It's about our future as a Nation, the United States of America, the greatest country on the face of the Earth. It is real, and we have to get on the stick. We have to do what's right.

So, there—no, there isn't a few seconds left. I thank you. I gave you my speech. I know some of you know and I have spoken to before, this is a big deal, this is a real big deal. It's happening right now in my State as we speak, and it is a serious threat, whether anybody wants to admit it or not.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. FONG. Thank you. Without objection, so ordered.

[The statement from Reliable Robotics was previously submitted by Hon. Garret Graves and is on pages 13–15.]

I now recognize Mr. García for 5 minutes for questions.

Mr. GARCÍA OF ILLINOIS. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

And I, too, want to express my gratitude to Garret Graves for all of his contributions and of course his role in shepherding the legislation that we are discussing today forward.

And of course I am glad to see that the FAA bill contained a workforce development programs component to it to include aviation manufacturing. Pursuing a wider pool of talent is necessary if we are to indeed move workforce needed to support increased travel demand in the coming years.

I would like to begin by thanking the witnesses here today and begin my questioning. Mr. Bunce, recognizing that the workforce development program is awaiting funding, can you describe what the recruitment of aviation manufacturing workers and aerospace engineers looks like right now? And why funding the Federal aviation workforce development programs is so important?

Mr. BUNCE. Sir, when we go and talk to parents and—think about when we fly today, very few people even look out the win-

dow, so, that luster that we used to have in aviation has been tarnished just because it is ubiquitous, we do it all the time.

So, what we have found is one of the things that you have helped us with, this committee, is talking about this is probably the most exciting time in aerospace since the dawn of the jet age, because we are going to unmanned systems to be able to deliver medicine all over the world. To be able to go and have electric aviation, which, think about it, service to rural communities and that we have the luxury of having a network of 5,000 public use airports that ring around our cities, but also in all of rural America.

No one in the Nation, on the planet, has this. And so, by having these grants and to be able to go and show young people that work, if you go into any of our factories, especially the AAM companies right now, you will see young men and women—and I am very proud of the fact that we have more and more women entering into aviation, which has been a very male-dominated profession up to this point, but it is just fascinating.

And these types of grants will help us share that word, not only to high schools and middle schools, but also in those tech centers, but also allowing folks to take advantage of the great programs like NASA has for scholarships for engineers that supply both Government and industry.

So, this is important. And we really need the funding out of the Appropriations Committee to be able to go and actualize this program.

Mr. GARCÍA OF ILLINOIS. And thank you for that. I strongly believe that the aviation workforce should reflect the diversity of the country and that the workforce development program words toward that, fully funding the Willa Brown aviation education programs which provides educational support. Opportunities in underrepresented community would also help.

Next, I would like to focus on the workers who make the flying experience possible. Mr. Regan, as you pointed out in your testimony, airport ramp workers are faced with numerous hazards in their day to day. FAA is currently reviewing ramp worker safety with the goal of submitting a report to Congress next year with recommendations.

Mr. Regan, why would addressing gaps in training and risks on the ramp help improve the safety and well-being of workers?

Mr. REGAN. Thank you for the question.

Frankly, it cannot be overstated how important having the proper safety and training for these workers is. We have seen the consequences of when things don't go well, and they are fatal. And we have had a number of workers who have unfortunately lost their lives at their workplaces and that should never be an acceptable outcome in our country and for our Government that we have people who are dying while doing their jobs.

And so, I think having the proper recommendations will be important. But then again, I think we also need Congress to continue to hold them accountable. And too often we end up waiting for the big authorization years to attack problems to address problems. And when we do have the proper feedback from the FAA on how to improve the system, Congress needs to be prepared to act right away and not wait for the next big bill, the next Christmas tree

to try to move forward. I think it is incumbent to act on the best information we have as it comes in.

Mr. GARCÍA OF ILLINOIS. Thank you for that.

Ramp workers play a critical role in guiding aircraft to and from their gates, loading and unloading luggage, amongst other duties. My Good Jobs for Good Airports bill would have ensured minimum wage and benefits for ramp workers and other service workers.

And I look forward to working with you in the next coming Congress and thereafter to improve the situation. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Mr. FONG. Thank you.

I now recognize myself for 5 minutes for questions.

If I can ask Mr. Woodworth, as you know, the UAV industry is new, there are challenges that are emerging, of course, when a new industry is operating in a new regulatory climate. What do you see the future of UAVs? What do you see that industry looking like 20 years from now?

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, I think that one of largest misconceptions about our industry is that it is this thing that is sort of super far off in the future. And I think that the reality both for UAS and companies in UAM is that technology is ready today and, sort of, large elements of that future are here right now.

I think for us, we are focused on primarily package delivery as our use case. And what that really means is, right now, today, you have multithousand-pound vehicles driving around small boxes, carrying people's meals, things like that, and it makes much more sense both for our infrastructure and for the safety of the general public to transport those goods by a smaller, more efficient means.

So, my and our view of the future is that you have a robust UAS ecosystem within the United States. You have operations happening all across the Nation around the clock and that those operations are having a real meaningful impact on the citizens of the U.S.

Mr. FONG. So, working backwards from that vision, certainly the regulatory climate right now was not crafted with UAV operations in mind. What recommendations, I read your testimony, but what specific recommendations do you have that would improve the structure, the framework that currently exists to allow it to be more robust?

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, I think a big element of that hinges on what is in the BVLOS rule. So, for example, things that have been challenging to us over the last several years are the topic of type certification, the topic of environmental impact assessments. A lot of things that are very much, sort of, like square peg/round hole problems for us where we are trying to fit into a set of aviation regulations that were built for aircraft that weigh many tens of thousands of pounds and were carrying around dozens or hundreds of people.

I think that if key elements of the BVLOS rule focus on solidifying the gains that have happened over the last year and a half or so and making those truly programmatic and truly rule-based so that we can continue to, sort of, build on the progress that has been made so far.

Mr. FONG. So, I think the big challenge certainly is that you are going to see very dynamic advancements over the next 5, 10, 15, 20 years. And you will have new platforms, you will have new—so, how do we get beyond just having to do a review every single time there is a new technology or a new platform? What advice do you have for Congress?

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, I think a big element, which I think was in the Reauthorization Act and has been in the dialogues over the last year and a half has been making things performance-based. So, focusing on, sort of, the true risk assessment of the systems that you are operating, the true types of operations that they are performing and then making sure that the regulatory framework around that can support a whole bunch of different solutions.

So, if you go out to an airport today, you look around the ramp, there are all sorts of different airplanes. And those airplanes are built for different use cases, but they all operate within the same framework. And so, I think that for emerging technologies, to take a similar approach where you focus on the outcome that you are trying to get to rather than a super prescriptive method of getting there.

Mr. FONG. And do you think that culture, that mentality exists at the FAA right now? Do you think that we are moving toward a performance-based approach or do you think there are still challenges that we need to work through?

Mr. WOODWORTH. I believe that we are moving towards that approach, but as you know, there is always the risk of, sort of, one step forward, one step back, one step to the side. I think that the rulemaking is an approach to solidify those perspectives and take it so that it can be applied for years to come.

Mr. FONG. So, let me ask, then, a broad question with just what you have outlined. What should this committee, what should Congress be working on in the year ahead to support the efforts? I know Mr. Van Drew mentioned having our country be more dominant in the UAV/UAS space.

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, I think it really is making sure that that rulemaking happens, making sure that it aligns with the intent that was written into the bill and being willing to change it if it does not.

I think that the reason that growth has been slower in the United States is because of the uncertainty of how long will it take to expand, is there a process that, if I go through the whole process at the end of it, will it still be the same checklist that I started with? Having predictability in the process is what fosters growth.

Mr. FONG. I certainly appreciate your testimony and your guidance and insight here.

I now recognize Representative Scholten for 5 minutes for questions.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Thank you so much, Mr. Chair. Thank you to our distinguished witnesses for being here today.

And I would be remiss if I didn't join the course of my colleagues in expressing appreciation for Chair Garret Graves and his leadership on the Aviation Subcommittee. Though he is not here at this moment, I just want to put into the record that he has brought tre-

mendous wisdom to this committee and our country, so, thank you immensely.

The FAA owns and operates air traffic control towers in airports across the country, of course this includes the federally operated air traffic control tower at the Gerald R. Ford International Airport in my district, our pride and joy. I am sure it is no surprise to anyone on this committee that I am bringing up our ATC.

At 60 years old, GRR's air traffic control tower is the oldest among the top 75 busiest airports. However, the FAA has yet to provide a timeline for when GRR's air traffic control tower will be replaced, despite the fact that it has been identified as a top two priority and the design phase is now complete. This project is critical to ensuring that consumers have a smooth and safe travel experience, while boosting Grand Rapid's local economy.

That is why I am so proud to have championed two provisions in the FAA reauthorization to ensure the transparent selection of air traffic control towers for replacement, as well as proper consideration of small hub air traffic control towers above a certain age when making these determinations.

Mr. Terreri, how will these provisions provide clarity to ensure the FAA's delays in air traffic control tower replacements do not hinder airports' plans to expand their operations and services for consumers?

Mr. TERRERI. Well, thank you for the question. As far as impacting airports, I think as airports look at their long-term development plans, a lot of times the control tower might be in a location that impedes future development.

So, having clarity on a timeline allows you in that master planning program to time when you are building additional terminals, moving the tower and sometimes having to raise the tower so that you have line of sight on all the new development and infrastructure that you have put in place.

So, having that timeline will be really helpful as we look to continue developing our airports.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Great, thank you. In addition to providing insight into air traffic control tower replacements, the 2024 FAA reauthorization established \$350 million in a reimbursement program for airports to replace PFAS firefighting foam and equipment.

This is also critically important to my district as we have been impacted by PFAS contamination at the airport and communities surrounding it. These Federal funds are particularly important in my community, not only because of the impact, but because of our location to the Great Lakes and the Grand River. Together, they form one of the largest freshwater estuaries in the entire world.

Again, to you, Mr. Terreri, does this provision go far enough to support airports transitioning to PFAS-free firefighting foams to protect our environment and public health? And if not, how else can Congress further support PFAS removal from airports, as well as the communities that surround them?

Mr. TERRERI. So, I think this is a great start to help with that transition. The PFAS forms that we were required to use, it was a requirement for airports and now having to make that transition, this is helping transition that foam. But then you still have, as you

have mentioned, some of the mitigation requirements that are going to be coming, right?

I think as you look forward, it is kind of really three things I would break it down to, a little bit more communication with the FAA on what is going to be required, same thing with the trucks and other equipment that are coming on. I think helping get the CERCLA liability protections for airports would be a very big help for us. I think those are probably two of the biggest things. I think they would really help. But I think what we have right now is a great start, and I think it is going to help us continue to solve this problem. It is an industry problem that we have to address.

Ms. SCHOLTEN. Thank you, sir.

I yield back.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA [presiding]. Thank you.

I recognize the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Westerman, for 5 minutes.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Thank you to the witnesses.

I would be remiss if I didn't get on the Garret Graves congratulations train. Garret and I came in together as freshmen, and we served not only on this committee, but also on the Natural Resources Committee together. And I will say, nobody commands the facts more than Garret. I feel like I have learned a lot from being around Garret. And I appreciate all your hard work and the policies you have moved forward, and the debate that you bring to Congress will be greatly missed. I consider you a dear friend and wish you the best.

Mr. Terreri, in the FAA reauthorization bill we enacted earlier this year, Congress directed the FAA to restore the waterfall for terminal flight data manager to not less than 89 airports. The FAA had previously reduced that waterfall from 89 to 49 airports, removing the Syracuse airport, as well as two airports in Little Rock and Fort Smith that serve many of my constituents.

Since then, the FAA has not released an updated waterfall of which 40 additional airports will receive this important technology. Can you explain the importance of the FAA moving forward with this directive and how airports benefit from the implementations of technologies like TFDM?

Mr. TERRERI. I am sorry, I didn't hear the question.

Mr. WESTERMAN. Can you explain the importance of the FAA moving forward with this directive and how airports benefit from the implementation of technologies like TFDM?

Mr. TERRERI. Which technologies? I am sorry?

Mr. WESTERMAN. Terminal flight data managers that they are going to add 40 more—

Mr. TERRERI [interrupting]. I am not sure. We can get back to you. I am not exactly sure what you are referring to.

Mr. WESTERMAN. All right. Well, if you can get back to me, I would appreciate that.

And I yield back the balance of my time to Mr. Stauber.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you very much.

I, too, want to thank Representative Graves for his leadership as he heads out. You have been a great Member; your policy, thoughts, and ideas are second to none.

I am going to get right to it. General aviation is the cornerstone of the aviation sector. In Duluth, Minnesota, Cirrus Aircraft has been one of the leaders in personal aviation, providing opportunity aviation to not only Minnesotans, but people around the world.

Mr. Bunce, there has been a lot of focus and rightfully so by the incoming administration on rulemaking. Your testimony argues that the FAA's rulemaking is unique, as opposed to other agencies, especially in terms of enabling innovation and industry competitiveness. Can you elaborate on why this is the case?

Mr. BUNCE. Mr. Stauber, let's take Cirrus for instance. We are going to have to do rulemaking in the next few years, just as we worked to eliminate the lead in the avgas. So, if we go with a system that says you have got to get rid of a certain number of rules before you can promulgate one, it is very hard for DOT or the FAA to determine which rules to get rid of because they are all enabling regulations for aviation.

So, we are very unique in that class. And it actually goes beyond just the rules itself. It goes to policy and guidance.

So, there was a time back a couple of administrations ago where they actually had in DOT what was called the rule of rules and guidance on guidance, which just bogged down the whole system. And so, we really need this committee's help to emphasize to the new administration that aviation is unique in that way. And we need to be able to keep promulgating rules to keep pace with how fast technologies are advancing.

Mr. STAUBER. My second question you just answered, which was going to be: What direction should Congress and the administration take in this critical area so that manufacturers like Cirrus Aircraft can continue to provide opportunities in general aviation?

Mr. BUNCE. Absolutely. And you think about Cirrus is one of the aircraft, both in the jet that they produce and the piston aircraft that have a parachute in it, that technology is just one of many technologies that we are promulgating.

It is now—and the jet has a button that if the pilot, something happens physiologically to the pilot, a passenger can push a button and that aircraft will land itself. And it tells air traffic control what is going on. The controllers know it is an emergency. It gives messages to the folks that are in the aircraft, don't worry, we have got it under control.

And I have actually flown that aircraft, been able to push that button. It is incredible technology and that is the cornerstone to what we are going to do with automation, because we are going to make flying in this Nation—we are going to lead the world in being able to automate in a very safe process, small aircraft to start with and it will build up.

And it is just like, 20 years from now, it is going to be—we don't have elevator operators anymore; in smaller aircraft, we probably will not have pilots, and it will be done in an extremely safe and predictable manner.

Mr. STAUBER. Thank you.

I would like to use the remainder of my time to briefly highlight the Duluth International Airport. Duluth provides vital service to our region in the north land. Commercial cargo and medical service flights utilize the airport. It is home to the previously mentioned

Cirrus Aircraft and the 148th Fighter Wing of the Minnesota Air National Guard, the F-16 unit, making the airport crucial to our economic and our national security.

And the airport supports over 6,000 jobs and contributes roughly \$760 million annually to our economy. However, the Duluth air traffic control tower is currently deteriorating. The existing tower is 70 years old. It is the third oldest air traffic control tower in the country.

And it is my hope that the FAA and the next administration make investment into this tower a top priority so Duluth can sustain air commerce in the region and economic vitality in northern Minnesota and throughout our entire State.

In addition, that air traffic control tower will give us the opportunity to get that NextGen aircraft to the 148th Fighter Wing. Those men and women are the best of the best.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you, Mr. Stauber. Look, before I get started on questions, I am going to recognize myself for 5 minutes, but I do want to also thank some of the people on our team that have been amazing over the years on this committee.

One person I didn't mention earlier is Maggie Ayrea, our deputy chief of staff who has run most of the portfolio, policy portfolio for this committee and our office. And Maggie, I want to thank you very much. In addition to leading our Washington team, she has had two kids and juggled all kinds of things. Maggie, we couldn't have done it without you. Thank you very, very much. And I really appreciate your friendship, partnership. You have been awesome, so, thanks.

I also want to thank Paul Sawyer, our chief of staff and all of the folks on the team that have worked on our transportation portfolio. Truly a team. We have a great group of folks and couldn't have done it without them.

Mr. Terreri, I want to ask you a quick question. You mentioned earlier the lack of certainty moving forward. Could you just very briefly describe why certainty is so important to you and to the airports in terms of regulatory certainty, numbers and things like that as you move forward?

Mr. TERRERI. So, you are referencing what we talked about with the control towers?

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. For example, AIP numbers and things like that, just giving you regulatory certainty and helping you understand.

Mr. TERRERI. Oh, the funding aspect.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Funding numbers.

Mr. TERRERI. So, right now, as we are going through and programming our three 5-year capital plans, and you have to prioritize your projects whether it is by safety and there is the qualifiers that we have to use, not knowing how much funding we have or are going to have available really limits our ability to lay out that framework of how are you going to develop the airport.

And in addition to that, what are you actually able to afford? Because sometimes some of the larger projects you may not be able to afford, so, you go and you break that into some smaller projects.

So, having that clear look ahead of what we know will be coming really does help us plan for the future.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you.

Mr. Woodworth, the last time you were here, 2023, last year, I think things look fundamentally different now than they did then. For example, FAA approving your approach to detect and avoid and sort of how you approach BVLOS, particularly in the DFW area. Can you talk a little bit about how that certainty has affected you and perhaps even investment decisions in the United States?

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, I think it follows a lot of what Mr. Terreri was saying. We are a business, we have to make plans about, sort of, where we are going to invest our resources. And there is a significant opportunity cost that comes with uncertainty. Like, if I can't plan out where I will be able to grow, what new locations I will be able to go to, it provides an immense amount of unpredictability that sort of limits those resources. I think that the last year and a half has been a great success story for the United States.

When I was here the last time, the vast majority of our operations were happening not in the United States. And today, the vast majority of our operations are happening in the United States, and they are growing at not an incremental level. I think that that is the other big step.

Whenever you get into a process where the next steps takes, sort of, less energy than the previous one, you know that you are on a path forward.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. So, if I can paraphrase, certainty, predictability, and efficiency attracts investment and the opposite repels it to other countries. Is that fair?

Mr. WOODWORTH. One hundred percent.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you very much.

And one other thing in that regard is the NEPA process. Once again, certainty, predictability, and efficiency, could you talk about briefly some of the scenarios you've seen in regard to NEPA and how that may challenge some of your operations?

Mr. WOODWORTH. Yes, when we first started, everything was done on a site-by-site basis. So, if you wanted to be at one store and you wanted to go across the street to another store, you had to redo the process. That could be 6, 9, 12 months or more, with a large unpredictability of when that would come. That makes planning expansion very difficult.

We have seen approaches become more pragmatic first by going to across all of DFW and then North Carolina just recently did one for a whole State. I think that we are at the point now where all of these come back with, sort of, no substantive finding, like, we could do one for the whole United States. I think that would be a logical next step.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Thank you very much. I appreciate it.

Now, Colonel, I want to ask you, you made mention earlier about concern about the 2 to 1. I wanted to give you an opportunity to talk a little bit more, meaning 2 to 1 regulations. I want to talk a little bit more. Look, I'm an awful bureaucrat. I can't stand red-tape. I like to move forward. I like to do things, build things, and make decisions.

But in the case, for example, with the powered-lift rule, can you talk a little bit about how the right regulations provide certainty as opposed to, sort of, creating this uncertainty and what that does for your members?

Mr. BUNCE. Yes, Mr. Chairman. Again, we could not even begin to operate these advanced air mobility vehicles without an operational rule, because we created what is called a powered-lift category. We used to have a category just called airplanes fixed-wing/helicopters, but we had nothing in powered-lift and the FAA decided to go down a powered-lift route without an operation rule, so, we had to do it.

But what was key is, and this applies very closely to BVLOS and how we want to advocate for being able to get this NPRM out because once they promulgate the notice of proposed rulemaking and allow industry to comment, heretofore until this committee put pressure on them, they would go an ex parte and they would say, okay, you can't engage industry anymore. And we go, well, wait, other Federal agencies don't do it that way.

And oh, by the way, don't you want us to talk about the comments that we made so that we can perfect it? And the proof was when the SFAR was released a couple months ago, NSR really had a positive reaction to it.

And we are hoping now if they get the BVLOS SFAR out, the industry can comment, but then they allow us—all they have to do it docket it and they can say, we had consultation with industry and we tried to improve upon it and that is—you all have helped us improve this process.

Mr. GRAVES OF LOUISIANA. Colonel, thank you. And I just want to be clear: so, that certainty or predictability helps to foster investments similar to what Mr. Woodworth says, it gives you clarity.

So, with that, I want to thank very much my friend, Mr. Carbajal, for indulging us here. And I think it is just a few of you left. Whoever is taking over the chair, we owe you all about 3 minutes, I am not kidding. So, feel free to be a little more liberal.

And with that, I recognize Mr. Carbajal.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you, Mr. Graves. First of all, before you leave, I just want to say thank you for your service. It's been a real pleasure working with you. I appreciated the common ground we oftentimes found, and I appreciated also jousting with you when I disagreed with you. So, good luck, and thank you for your service.

Mr. Terreri, I was successful in including two of my bills aimed at dealing with PFAS pollution at the airports in the FAA reauthorization that was signed into law. My PFAS Act establishes a \$350 million reimbursement program for airport sponsors to replace PFAS firefighting foam and equipment, and my SOAR Act would require periodic reporting from the FAA on the transition plan to move away from PFAS. We know PFAS is harmful to public health, and we need to move away from it.

I was glad to have my colleagues Representative Van Orden and Representative Lawler help me push for these bipartisan provisions. Can you tell us how airports are working with the FAA and Congress to ensure these provisions are appropriately implemented?

Mr. TERRERI. Yes. So, we are in communication with the FAA on what is that process going to look like. What is the transition? How is it going to impact the equipment? And so, we have been having a lot of open dialogue. I think making sure that that communication continues is going to be paramount to make sure that this is a smooth transition from the former AFFF to the new F3.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Mr. Bunce and Mr. Terreri, an issue I continuously hear from my constituents deals with airplane noise pollution. My district is home to three airports in Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo Counties. While these airports are an important piece of our tourism economy, my constituents have raised legitimate issues.

Mr. Bunce, can you talk about new entrants in technologies that will help reduce aircraft noise?

Mr. BUNCE. Yes, Mr. Carbajal, I mentioned earlier that we have the luxury of having this incredible network of 5,000 public use airports around the country. And if you just look at the distance between Santa Barbara and San Luis Obispo, you end up having, I think, four airports.

I looked on ForeFlight the other day that we'll be able to operate these aircraft out of. And think about now being able to take people down to LAX or up to SFO for their long-haul flights and then we take away the amount of traffic that are at those two airports.

But with that, in addition to that, our engine companies are doing some great work in being able to look at the nacelle, which is the structure that surrounds the engine, reforming it to reduce the noise signature, but also then looking at what is called open-rotor technology where we actually free the blades out that reduces noise, too.

So, whether it is Rolls, GE, Pratt & Whitney, Williams, all these companies are really focusing on reducing that noise signature. So, I think as we embrace this technology of advanced air mobility, we are also going to—traditional aviation will be able to make some pretty neat improvements in noise mitigation in the years ahead.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Mr. Terreri, how are airports working with their local communities on mitigation projects and new flightpaths?

Mr. TERRERI. So, the flightpaths are with the FAA air traffic control. And when we get complaints, noise complaints, I will use Syracuse specifically, when we get noise complaints, we will work with the local tower to see if there is anything that can be done in terms of aircraft routing.

Other things that we can look at doing is using preferential runways, keeping communities, development, working with our local outside the airport zoning boards to make sure that they are not putting new communities in the paths of flights.

So, that is some of the stuff that we have done, especially as Syracuse has continued to grow, making sure that everyone understands the airport, the predominant flightpaths and, kind of, what does that mean for our region.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Mr. Bunce, across the manufacturing sector, I understand there are increasing challenges associated with supply chains.

The aviation sector is not immune to the difficulties faced in sourcing materials and dealing with constraints. Can you elaborate on some of the challenges general aviation manufacturers are facing today and any recommendations to promote stability and support competitiveness?

Mr. BUNCE. Well, sir, supply chain is just not unique to general aviation. Our commercial aviation brethren and our military are all faced with this dilemma of supply chain. And it really is whack-a-mole these days, because when you think you have got it fixed.

I think one of our engine manufacturers mentioned that they had to source over 10,000 different new parts and pieces once the war in Ukraine happened, once the pandemic happened. Because a lot of the small mom and pops that were providing parts and pieces, small structures, forgings and castings, have gone away. And they just haven't been sustainable, whether the workforce has aged out or they are working from home. Manufacturing has really taken a hit, that impacts our supply chain.

So, I am hoping that we put a focus as a Nation on supply chain. We have got to have an independence from some of the vulnerable pieces of the supply chain. We all saw recently China has restricted some of the precious metals that are very important to aerospace, and we are going to have to find different sources for that.

But supply chain is critical and it has got to be an industrial policy for this Nation that also helps the Federal Government to look at supply chain and be able to try and fix this.

What we relied on before in the pandemic was called just in time. We didn't have to keep large inventories and everything because it was just delivered when we needed from a global structure. That is gone now, and it is a new paradigm for all of us.

Mr. CARBAJAL. Thank you.

Mr. Chair, I yield back.

Mr. PERRY [presiding]. The Chair thanks the gentleman.

The Chair now recognizes the gentlelady from the District of Columbia, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. As a cochair of the Quiet Skies Caucus and the Member who represents the District of Columbia, which is plagued by airplane and helicopter noise, I am pleased we would be able to get noise provisions included in the FAA reauthorization of 2024. Under this law, the FAA has a mandate to do more to combat aviation noise and to engage more with affected communities.

Mr. Bunce, in your testimony, you mentioned that the General Aviation Manufacturers Association and the companies it represents are developing electric and hybrid-propelled vertical takeoff and landing aircraft. Would you describe the impact that this technology could have on reducing air aviation noise, particularly for airports, adjacent communities to airports?

Mr. BUNCE. Yes, ma'am. As we looked to this technology, one of our companies just flew its first production aircraft. And basically, it was outfitted the way it is going to be delivered to one of the cargo carriers. And the pilot was up there, and he actually is the owner of the company, he just said, it is like flying a sailplane. You can't hear these vehicles.

And so, if we put it in the context of Washington, DC, here where we live, we listen to a lot of noise all the time, but these vehicles will be able to disperse the concentration in traffic, take it out to all of the airports that ring this city, which will help us. But also, we can't forget about the technology that with new techniques and air traffic control that allow aircraft, aircraft that are taking off from Reagan for instance, to climb faster so that it reduces that noise footprint because it has a larger ascent and the noise reduces as it climbs faster.

But also, you can power back on your descent if you can get a controlled continuous descent down the landing. And so, a lot of this technology is all tied together in being able to reduce noise when we use the airspace efficiently, but also use the network of airports.

But you would be amazed if you were able just to see these new types of advanced air mobility aircraft fly, because you are looking at them and you might hear a hum, but it is something that is no more than what we would hear on normal street traffic. It is amazing.

Ms. NORTON. That sounds excellent.

Mr. Regan, the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 includes a provision requiring the FAA Administrator to implement new flight procedures and establish or modify aircraft arrival and departure routes for the purposes of reducing aviation noise in neighboring communities. Do pilots have sufficient resources and training to safely perform new procedures and fly routes that minimize noise impact in airports' adjacent communities? And if not, what can Congress do to ensure that pilots have what they need?

Mr. REGAN. Thank you. Our pilots—our country's pilots are certainly—I mean, they are the best trained in the world. They are going to be able to handle new procedures to address things like air noise pollution. But that is as long as Congress maintains those high standards. And we have seen a lot of efforts over the past—this is my third FAA bill I have done at TTD, and every single one, we have had to fight back against efforts to reduce pilot training and certification standards, and that would be a dangerous and, I think, shortsighted approach to meeting the newer challenges that are approaching pilots and the aviation system broadly, including reducing noise pollution.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, and I yield back.

Mr. PERRY. The chairman thanks the gentlelady. The chairman now recognizes Representative Mann.

Mr. MANN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I would like to associate myself with the positive remarks towards honoring Chairman Graves. He is a good friend, and he will be missed.

Thank you all for being here today. I represent the Big First district of Kansas. Aviation is a critical industry in the State of Kansas with roughly 100 general aviation airports, several commercial and regional airports, and a huge footprint in aviation and aerospace manufacturing. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 included critical provisions to ensure that our aviation industries are able to improve services, bolster our workforce, and promote American manufacturing and innovation. That is why it is crucial that the FAA and DOT waste no time in implementing the provisions

set forth in the bill so that the aviation industry can continue to get to work.

Just a handful of quick questions. First for you, Mr. Terreri. My district has 60 primarily rural counties and we depend on reliable air services to connect to the rest of the world. Please speak to the importance of certain provisions in reauthorization like the Airport Improvement Program and new aircraft innovation that are critical to ensuring that all communities can access air service.

Mr. TERRERI. So, I think one of the biggest benefits is we have started to really bring forward advanced air mobility, and what you are seeing, and where the airlines and you have seen a reduction in services to smaller communities that used to have air service; now, using advanced air mobility, that is a feasible business model. It can actually work to fill that gap as airlines start to consolidate in.

So, in this bill, starting to lay the groundwork for advanced air mobility and integrating into airports and into airspace, that is going to be key, and then on the airport side, the additional funding allowing—this is going to be a different type of infrastructure, so, allowing now to build the proper infrastructure that is needed to support these smaller communities that ultimately need access to the airspace system.

Mr. MANN. I agree. Thank you.

Next question for you, Mr. Bunce. You rightly highlighted the importance of FAA and industry workforce efforts in the correlation between technical expertise and then oversight. As a proponent of the manufacturing workforce program, please elaborate on how this would further innovation competitiveness, but also safety.

Mr. BUNCE. Well, sir, as you know, Kansas is one of our centers of excellence for aviation. It is not lost on anyone, we have the aircraft world in Wichita, but also throughout the State we have a tremendous supply base. The institutions of learning in Kansas have really tried to develop whether it is up in Salina or Wichita State, NIAR, all of these different great places where we are taking young people and training them, but we've got to keep that feedstock going, and I think that is where, if we can get the appropriations and the money toward the manufacturing side, it really does help us keep the leadership that we need in the world.

The programs that are developed, I am very familiar with the one in Wichita State where they are taking young people that are coming out of the military at McConnell Air Force Base, and being able to then have an apprentice program with our companies that surround Wichita, and so, they are able to make a living while they are going to school getting their ratings that they need from the FAA to be able to enter and do the manufacturing and maintenance. It is a fantastic program, and it should be a model for what we can do throughout the Nation.

Mr. MANN. I agree. Great for veterans. Great for the industry. Great for everybody. One last quick question. From an FAA perspective, why are knowledge-sharing opportunities with industry so important? I think we often think about the industry standpoint, but from FAA's perspective, why is that critical?

Mr. BUNCE. Sir, I mentioned earlier that we are filling a great pool of experience that left the FAA due to retirement and aging

out, or we in the industry, we pay them more, we hire them away. And so, we have got a bunch of young people in there, and the young people are ready to go. They want to learn. They want to apply the skills that they learned in college, but they don't have that ability to draw on the expertise that they used to.

And so, what we are doing, and the FAA supported us through the help of this committee to be able to go and do these skills enhancement training where we will take them to our factories and we will have them sit down with the engineers and be able to say, this is how we do it here. Or we host conferences.

We at GAMA just hosted a battery conference. Lithium-ion batteries, we all know about the potential for thermal runaway and a fire. That is why we have the procedures when we go on the aircraft.

But there are new ways to be able to mitigate that, and we need to be able to teach new people in the FAA what modern technology allows us to make it very safe, that you can fly these in the unmanned vehicles, and also, in the advanced air mobility vehicles, so, this is absolutely critical for this knowledge transfer that it goes from industry to Government, but then also, Government can say, this is how I will approach regulating this, and it allows us to have that confidence in relationship building back and forth to make the system work.

Mr. MANN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. PERRY. The Chair thanks the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes himself for a period of questioning.

Mr. Terreri, I know that you have answered multiple questions on the firefighting foam, but I have got a few more of my own. So, I think in your testimony you referenced the forced transition from aqueous-film forming foam, or the AFFF, to fluorine-free foam, F3, and the desire of airports to receive funding to assist with the costly transition and to avoid CERCLA liability for discharge of a firefighting foam that was federally mandated.

And so, while the EPA has issued an administrative policy that it does not intend to pursue entities like airports, I think it is important that Congress provide certainty to airports that they will not be held liable in these circumstances. As we know, administrations change, viewpoints change. What is not palatable today becomes palatable tomorrow. But more importantly, according to the Naval Research Laboratory, AFFF creates both a film and a foam blanket that remains stable longer and is more effective than foams that do not contain the current list of chemicals. In other words, the AFFF is more effective than its alternatives as we currently know them.

Other observations from the Naval Research Laboratory are that F3s are less forgiving than AFFF and require more precise application due to the absence of the aqueous film. Fluorine-free films can be optimized using aspirated nozzles that improve the blanketing effect, but this application is difficult around obstacles like the thing that is on fire, like an airplane with people in it, and across far distances, because heaven knows, the first thing we all want to do is run head-long into a fire, right?

F3s require a less-aggressive application so that the foam does not get mixed into the fuel source, and itself burn, which, like, I

just kind of think about the implications of that. You are a firefighter. People are trying to get off of a burning airplane. You have got to be careful because the firefighting foam might catch on fire, right? That is kind of mind-blowing, actually.

Environmental conditions, such as wind at an airport, right? Windsocks are at—we are—as aviators, the wind is an important factor, ever present, almost always, but the wind may cause holes to open up in the F3 blanket. You can imagine what that creates.

And, of course, repeat applications or passes may be required to effectively extinguish a fire, which isn't helpful either. So, the GAO also identified concerns about the performance of alternative foams in temperature extremes. You know, that burning stuff is hot. You get the plastic seats and the foam, et cetera.

I certainly understand the concerns surrounding the potential contamination issue with AFFF. We have been dealing with that here. It is very alarming that we are rushing to a transition at taxpayers' expense without an alternative of comparable performance. I get the concerns, and maybe we should minimize practice and some things like that, or practice with something lesser, just for the sake of practice. But just running head-long into a less effective alternative and forcing everybody to pay for it, not providing the liability protection, I think, is shortsighted.

Do you know how the airports plan to address the performance gap, and what would you recommend be done to address the concerns of the flying public that doesn't want to burn alive in an aircraft when this alternative foam is not as effective? It is just not as effective, right? Do you have some recommendations?

Mr. TERRERI. Well, I think definitely with the new product, there is training that is taking place. That is what is happening at the FAA tech center along with the ARFF Working Groups to really understand how this chemical and this component can be used and should be used in its application. It is definitely different than AFFF, but that is something that the industry professionals are all looking at to make sure that in the event it has to be deployed, it is done in a safe manner to protect anyone who is on that aircraft.

Mr. PERRY. Would you—do you believe we should be forcing the transition until we know what the performance concerns are and what all the potential alternatives might be to be as effective as the current firefighting applications?

Mr. TERRERI. Forcing—well, with the FAA having required us—

Mr. PERRY [interrupting]. I mean, you are kind of the expert here, right? And so, your voice matters. So, we are saying, we have this problem over here, we want to fix it, but let's just do whatever we got to do to deal with this problem, which might create a whole other problem, which includes people trying to get off a burning aircraft that can't be put out because—that is where we are. You have got to say it the way it is. So, I am just wondering if you agree with our current approach?

Mr. TERRERI. Well, I agree that with this new—the testing that is being done on the new product, it gets applied to the aircraft, right? That they have process and policy on how it is applied so that it is an alternative—

Mr. PERRY [interrupting]. We are implementing enforcing the implementation, right? Before the testing is complete. Is that good or not good?

Mr. TERRERI. I have to know a little bit more about it. In the firefighting foam, I guess the unique differences that you are really speaking to here, because I am not an ARFF expert. I am not a firefighting and chemical expert on their extinguishing agents.

Mr. PERRY. Okay. The Chair thanks the gentleman. The Chair now recognizes the gentleman from New Jersey.

Mr. KEAN OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to our witnesses for being here today. I want to thank Chairman Sam Graves, Chairman Garret Graves, Ranking Members Larsen and Cohen for their work in passing this critical legislation. I am pleased to work alongside them, all the members of this committee, to produce and pass this bipartisan FAA reauthorization.

Now, this committee faces the critical task of conducting oversight on its implementation. It must ensure that these important mandates addressing safety and passenger experience, spurring innovation and workforce growth, and cementing our commercial and general aviation sectors' place as a world's gold standard are realized.

Mr. Terreri, as you may know, my district in central and northwest New Jersey has been the epicenter of unexplained drone sightings over the last number of weeks. What advice would you give to the FAA to modernize and to adapt to this emerging technology, particularly with regards to airports and places of interest like stadiums and governmental sites?

Mr. TERRERI. Thank you. So, Syracuse Airport, we were one of the five airports that were selected to be part of the FAA's drone detection mitigation program, and out of that they tested different technologies that could detect drone activity in and around the airport. One of the things that we have done in Syracuse is we have formed the center of excellence for advanced air mobility and what we call the new air alliance where we actually now have a higher visibility and enhanced visibility on drone activity in and around the airport in Syracuse.

We have hosted the advanced—sorry, we have hosted the Department of Homeland Security, the Under Secretary. We have signed an MOA with the Under Secretary to help using our technologies to do drone detection, so, there are systems that are out right now that can help detect.

The challenge that we have is that, if I detect a drone over my airport, I have no ability to do anything about it. The FAA, because this technology is not FAA technology, it can't be in the tower, so, the FAA doesn't have the same visibility that we do as the airport on drones over our airports.

So, there are a couple things that can be done here, and it really just becomes some of that—a lot more coordination and collaboration of what we are seeing in the private sector into the FAA to solve some of these.

On the issue of enforcement, if an operator is off the airport, who is responsible for that? I am not allowed to take a drone, do any kind of mitigation drone over our airport. There is nothing I can

do about it. Is it local law enforcement? Who has the authority to mitigate the drones once you have detected one?

We can detect them. What do you do with it? That is the question that needs to get answered.

Mr. KEAN OF NEW JERSEY. People across the country are asking that very question. Thank you.

Mr. Regan, as you note in your testimony, the 2024 reauthorization took steps to address mental health procedures among pilots and in the aviation industry, which is an issue I have heard many concerns about. However, the Biden administration's interpretation of these sections is unclear. In your opinion, what initiatives should the FAA take to clarify this element of the law, and to address mental health challenges for pilots, mechanics, and controllers?

Mr. REGAN. Thank you for the question. I think that the first step is starting—I think in many industries, including aviation where we have safety-sensitive responsibilities, whether you be a pilot or controller or maintenance worker, I think the acceptance and treatment of mental health conditions has lagged behind the broader country when it comes to recognition that this is a health problem that can be addressed through treatment and with the right resources we can support people and see them through that challenge.

Until we acknowledge that, and that people are not held at fault, at risking their jobs because they are seeking help for something that they are going through, then we are not going to be able to adequately address the problem. And so, we need to be able to clearly establish the health aspect of this and treat it as such as opposed to the stigmatization that we have seen in the past around these issues.

Mr. KEAN OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you.

Mr. Bunce, this committee in the House will address various workforce challenges during our hearings and in the final reauthorization, particularly in terms of acquiring and maintaining the expertise necessary to certify new technologies, such as unmanned aerial systems and advanced air mobility technology. In your estimation, how is the FAA progressing on implementation of these rules to help the aviation industry?

Mr. BUNCE. Continue on, sir, with a program that they have for the knowledge. Basically, the experience of being able to get with industry, and being able to share that knowledge. Again, I think the FAA has done a great job in trying to attract young people, and quite frankly, that is who you are going to attract at the wage level that you have available to the FAA.

We in the industry are always going to be able to pay engineers more and young people more, but it is a great building ground for them to go into Government and be able to learn how to be a regulator, because they become very valuable to us in the industry. But we have to give them the experience. And the only way that they are going to do that is if we have this knowledge-sharing, and get them on the road and learn about the new technologies out there and learn from the experience that we have resident in U.S. industry.

That is probably the only way we will be able to do it, and I do compliment the FAA for taking this seriously, going and making

the budgetary moves within their internal budget to be able to get people on the road. And a lot of times, we in industry will come to the FAA also and provide seminars and that for them on this new technology, but that is the only way it will work. And that is why it is vitally important for us to continue on to be able to feed the FAA and feed the industry with young people through the workforce development grants that we need the appropriators to fund.

Mr. KEAN OF NEW JERSEY. Thank you. I yield back.

Mr. PERRY. Thank you. The gentleman yields. Are there further questions from any members of the subcommittee who have not yet been recognized? Seeing none, I do want to make just a comment regarding my colleague Mr. Graves. While I must take exception to—well, let me just say this: I have always enjoyed our spirited conversations, especially the ones where I have been right, which is most of them when it concerns Mr. Graves, but I do wish him all the best, and I am sure we will see him more, and the same thing for him and his family.

All right. Seeing no other questions, that concludes our hearing for today. I would like to thank each of our witnesses for your testimony and your time here today. This subcommittee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:19 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

QUESTION TO JASON TERRERI, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, SYRACUSE REGIONAL AIRPORT AUTHORITY, ON BEHALF OF THE AIRPORTS COUNCIL INTERNATIONAL-NORTH AMERICA (ACI-NA), FROM HON. BRANDON WILLIAMS

Question 1. Mr. Terreri, in the FAA Reauthorization bill we enacted earlier this year, Congress directed the FAA to restore the waterfall for Terminal Flight Data Manager to not less than 89 airports. This provision was necessary as the FAA had previously reduced that waterfall from 89 to 49 airports, including removing the Syracuse airport. Since then, the FAA has not released an updated waterfall of which 40 additional airports will receive this important technology.

Can you explain the importance of the FAA moving forward with this directive and how airports benefit from the implementation of technologies like TFDM?

ANSWER. Airport operators were encouraged to see the possible extension of the FAA's Terminal Flight Data Manager (TFDM) program to additional airports in Paragraph 619 (e) of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. Terminal Flight Data Manager (TFDM) is a key component of FAA's NextGen Airspace Modernization Program and the most significant component of the NextGen program that addresses aircraft surface management at airports.

The program has two distinct versions—or “configurations”—as the FAA has termed them. The foundational version—Configuration B—enables decades-old paper flight strips to be replaced by electronic flight strips. These electronic flight strips enable more efficient digital monitoring and sequencing of aircraft operations by air traffic controllers in FAA airport traffic control towers (ATCTs). They also facilitate more efficient and accurate data exchange with flight operators, including airlines and general aviation pilots, allow for real-time updates of flight information, and enable better collaborative decision-making between air traffic controllers and flight operators.

The more advanced version—Configuration A—included electronic flight strips but also adds dynamic departure scheduling and metering capabilities. Conceptually, these capabilities will enable air traffic controllers—working in collaboration with airlines and in some cases airport operators—to reduce departure congestion and improve collaborative departure sequence management in cases like poor weather when airport departure capacity is reduced.

Airports have been supportive of TFDM Configuration B implementation, which help busy ATCT controllers manage airport ground operations more efficiently and effectively. It also provides critical foundational elements for collaborative management of ground operations into the future. We have also been supportive of targeted implementation of Configuration A at locations where flight operators have indicated an intent to utilize the departure sequencing capabilities TFDM would provide.

QUESTION TO ADAM WOODWORTH, CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, WING AVIATION LLC, FROM HON. DINA TITUS

Question 1. In your testimony, you highlighted the progress Wing has made receiving approval for Beyond Visual Line of Sight (BVLOS) operations. And you are not alone. Just this week the LVMPD's UAS program received approval to conduct BVLOS operations which will help improve public safety. These are steps in the right direction, but I have concerns that we may still fall behind other countries when it comes to drone competitiveness. As you know, I worked with my Drone Caucus Co-Chair Rep. Garret Graves on language to establish a national BVLOS framework, but this proposed rule is behind schedule. That's why I joined many of

my colleagues on this committee calling on the DOT to issue a proposed rulemaking right away.

If this rulemaking continues to fall behind schedule, what will the implications be for the domestic drone industry and its competitiveness?

ANSWER. The United States is currently in a global competition with our peers to safely and efficiently integrate drone operations with traditional aviation. While the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has approved a number of beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations under exemptions and waivers, the United States lacks a national regulatory or policy framework for BVLOS operations that will establish new safety and certification criteria and remove current impediments. The FAA recognizes that routine BVLOS drone operations are an essential next step and as a result empaneled an Aviation Rulemaking Committee (ARC) that submitted a nearly 400 page report that provided a specific roadmap for a regulatory framework. The U.S. drone industry is now mature enough to enable safe integration into both the national airspace and our communities at scale. For example, Wing now has nearly two dozen operating sites in Dallas-Fort Worth and continues to grow there, with key technological advances now approved by the FAA that allow us to safely fly true BVLOS without visual observers.

The biggest challenge we face right now is ensuring that the regulatory framework for drones locks in recent progress—particularly on airworthiness approval processes for aircraft changes—and continues to advance highly automated safe operations. Importantly, that framework must be established without losing momentum from the great progress on approval processes implemented over the last two years, commonly referred to as the Criteria for Making Determinations or “CMD” but even that method could still stand to be improved. The BVLOS rulemaking that your legislation directed the FAA to develop is critical to establishing that national framework, and we are eager for the FAA to publish the draft rule they have in hand so we can move to the important review and comment period.

After years of investing overseas due to a better regulatory environment, Wing is ready to make significant investments in the United States to scale up our service here in the US. In order to take that step, we need the FAA to complete their transition from a patchwork web of waivers and exemptions to a consolidated and consistent regulatory framework based in codified rulemaking. That starts with publishing the draft rule that the FAA has ready for public review. Until that happens, we cannot comment on this important enabling regulation, and key steps enabling drone delivery at scale still face significant delays. BVLOS flights have the potential to deliver numerous societal benefits that include enhancing the economy, reducing congestion, and serving a broader range of people. And the FAA and the Department of Transportation should move expeditiously in moving that framework forward into public view.

If the U.S. fails to publish a workable BVLOS framework for comment and ultimately for finalization soon, we risk American drone industry leaders again turning to opportunities overseas to grow their businesses, or worse yet, stagnation or reduced investment in American development. And without a robust and healthy domestic drone industry, the American public will be deprived of the benefits mentioned above, our citizens will fail to benefit from the growth and development opportunities of this promising industry, and other countries could reap the economic, societal, and technological rewards that come with being a true leader in the drone sector.

Now is the time for the US to shape policy at a global level as we strive to create an optimal regulatory environment for US expansion, both domestically and in other jurisdictions, in which we provide right-sized frameworks, consistency, and certainty for the American commercial drone industry.

QUESTION TO GREG REGAN, PRESIDENT, TRANSPORTATION TRADES DEPARTMENT, AFL–CIO (TTD), FROM HON. DINA TITUS

Question 1. Frontline workers have suffered verbal abuse and physical assaults at the hands of unruly travelers. According to FAA data last updated on December 1, there have been 1,921 unruly passenger reports. While this is a marked improvement from calendar year 2021 (5,973), it still represents an increase from calendar year 2019 (1,161). Along with many of my colleagues, I fought to ensure the bipartisan FAA Reauthorization bill included multiple provisions to combat assaults at the airport and in-flight. Unfortunately, many of deadlines for implementing these provisions are now overdue.

How has the rise in assaults impacted recruitment and retention of your frontline workforce, and why is it important that these provisions be properly implemented soon?

ANSWER. A number of these assaults are recorded and go viral or are on the nightly news. They certainly affect recruitment and retention, particularly if these workers do not feel backed up by the carrier. These provisions must be implemented soon to ensure the training workers receive meets defined minimums. Crucially, many of these pro-worker provisions require workers' designated labor representatives to be consulted or seated on a task force. Workers' duly elected labor representatives are best positioned to address any gaps in training.

QUESTIONS TO GREG REGAN, PRESIDENT, TRANSPORTATION TRADES DEPARTMENT, AFL–CIO (TTD), FROM HON. CHRISTOPHER R. DELUZIO

Question 1. Pittsburgh International Airport in my district is an overhaul maintenance base for American Airlines. More than 400 FAA-certified aircraft mechanics work there under the industry-leading union contract. That contract, negotiated by the Transportation Workers Union and the Machinists, requires a super-majority of airline maintenance work to be performed in the U.S. by union members. Unfortunately, our own government has undermined great contracts like this by actively encouraging airlines to offshore mechanic jobs onto lower safety standards at FAA-certified facilities abroad. Congress directed the FAA to close all of these incentives as part of the 2024 reauthorization bill, but so far, the agency has made very little progress.

Mr. Regan, you mention the importance of reshoring aircraft maintenance jobs as part of your testimony. Can you share the scale of this issue—how many more jobs could and should be in the U.S. if the FAA closed its loopholes that encourage airlines to offshore this work?

ANSWER. U.S. airlines now employ 20,000 fewer mechanics than in 2000. Some jobs were lost due to consolidation, but most have gone abroad. More than half of all mechanics globally working at FAA-certified facilities are outside of the U.S. Every 1% increase in the proportion of work performed here creates nearly 3,000 good-paying mechanic jobs. Keep in mind these are U.S. aircraft based in the U.S. They are being flown abroad for the explicit purpose of offshoring this work. There are no supply chain or other concerns here—the airlines could reshore nearly all of this work tomorrow if they wanted to.

Question 2. Mr. Regan, back to you, one of these largest loopholes allows FAA-certified facilities outside of the U.S. to use uncertified mechanics—people with no license and no training—to repair, maintain, and overhaul U.S.-flagged aircraft. Over here, U.S.-based mechanics are required to both pass several tests and work in their fields for at least 18 months prior to repairing these aircraft.

Is this safe? And is it fair to U.S. workers who are now competing against these unlicensed workers abroad?

ANSWER. Transportation labor has consistently advocated for uniform safety and security standards across all facilities that perform maintenance on U.S. aircraft. Maintenance facilities, regardless of their location, should adhere to the same rigorous safety standards as domestic repair stations to prevent lapses in oversight. Establishing minimum qualifications for mechanics and other maintenance workers is essential to ensure that only highly trained professionals are responsible for critical maintenance tasks, safeguarding U.S. aviation operations' integrity. Having lower training standards for mechanics based outside the U.S. has led airlines to hire more mechanics internationally. This trend is evident from airlines offshoring heavy maintenance work; even small incentives can drive profit-focused businesses to move jobs overseas to cut costs. We urge the FAA to consider expanding regulations to include part 121 air carrier-employed maintenance personnel located abroad in a future rulemaking.