

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

February 2, 2015

The Honorable Bill Shuster  
Chairman  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
2251 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
2164 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Frank LoBiondo  
Chairman  
Aviation Subcommittee  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
2251 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Rick Larsen  
Ranking Member  
Aviation Subcommittee  
Committee on Transportation  
and Infrastructure  
2164 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster, Ranking Member DeFazio, Chairman LoBiondo, and Ranking Member Larsen,

As the Transportation and Infrastructure Committee continues its consideration of a long-term reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), we write to express our opposition to the inclusion of any provisions that seek to undermine the pilot qualification rule, which requires a first officer to attain an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate, typically achieved through 1,500 hours of flight time.

As you know, Colgan Air Flight 3407 tragically crashed in Clarence Center, NY in February 2009, claiming the lives of all those onboard and an additional individual on the ground. After relentless advocacy from the families of those impacted, Congress enacted sweeping aviation reforms designed to achieve One Level of Safety between regional and mainline carriers. The legislation focused on needed reforms, many of which had been recommended by the National Transportation and Safety Board (NTSB), including science based flight and duty regulations as well as updated pilot training and qualification standards.

Unfortunately, the regional airlines, which at the time were implicated by the NTSB as having some of the most glaring safety vulnerabilities within the industry, have been spreading misinformation in an effort to have the pilot qualification rule rolled back, disregarding the fact that these and other enacted reforms have ushered in the safest period in our nation's history for

regional air carriers. Specifically, these carries have claimed that the new regulations are causing a pilot shortage, contributing to hiring difficulties, and will even force a reduction in service to small and medium sized communities.

These assertions are untrue and obscure the real cause of the pilot shortage, which are the inadequate wages, often as little as \$14,000 to \$20,000 earned annually by a newly-hired first officer. In fact, the first officer on Flight 3407 earned just \$16,000 a year. A Government Accountability Office (GAO) report on pilot supply and demand issues substantiated this finding, noting that a sufficient pool of trained pilots exist, and identifying the meager compensation as a key obstacle to attracting qualified applicants. The same report found that there were 109,465 pilots with an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) license, while only 66,000 such jobs existed in 2012.

Flight 3407's pilot was hired with just 600 hours of flight time for his first regional airline position. Had the additional requirements already been in place, he may never have been thrust into a position for which he did not have the necessary experience and training.

The carefully crafted pilot qualification standards are a critical component towards the achievement of 'One Level of Safety between all major and regional carriers. We respectfully ask that you continue to demonstrate your strong commitment to aviation safety by withstanding industry pressure and maintaining this vital rule intact.

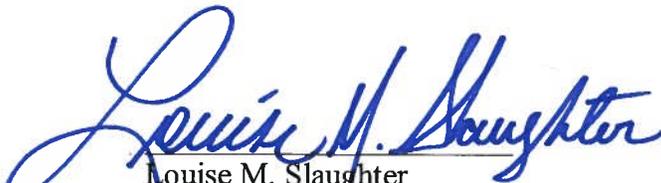
Sincerely,



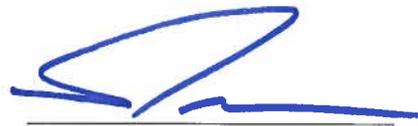
Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress



Chris Collins  
Member of Congress



Louise M. Slaughter  
Member of Congress



Tom Reed  
Member of Congress