

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 1, 2020

The Honorable Elaine L. Chao
Secretary
Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, S.E.
Washington, D.C. 20590

The Honorable Steve Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Secretary Chao and Administrator Dickson:

Section 625 of the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018* (P.L. 115-254) authorized two aviation workforce grant programs to facilitate the development of the next generation of aircraft pilots and maintenance technicians. Congress fully funded the programs for fiscal year (FY) 2020 in the *Further Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2020* (P.L. 116-94).

Given the broad, bipartisan support for the grant programs on Capitol Hill, and among schools, industry, and labor, we are disappointed that they are not yet operating. Understanding that establishing a workforce grant program is new to the Federal Aviation Administration, we urge you to initiate them before the end of the current fiscal year.

The grant program for pilot education will support the creation and delivery of curriculum designed to provide high school students with meaningful science, technology, engineering, math and aviation education. This program has the potential to grow our nation's pilot workforce by encouraging our nation's youth to become the next generation of commercial, general aviation, drone or military pilots.

The grant program for aviation technicians will address the well-documented maintenance industry skills gap by encouraging and facilitating collaboration between schools, government, labor and industry to recruit and train the technical talent America's aerospace sector will require to keep the nation's aircraft operating safely and efficiently.

The ongoing pandemic-related economic disruptions only heighten the urgency and need for these programs. Due in particular to the increased pace of aviation sector retirements in recent months, when industry business conditions return to pre-pandemic levels, the need for pilots and technicians will be more acute than before. By awarding grants now to encourage innovation in training and recruitment, the federal government can have a positive and lasting impact on the aviation workforce, as intended by Congress.

These important programs have been authorized for almost two years, and there is significant interest by stakeholders to establish them. With the end of fiscal year fast approaching, we strongly encourage you to get both grant programs up and running in the coming weeks.

Sincerely,

/s/

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

/s/

James M. Inhofe
United States Senator

/s/

Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

/s/

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator

/s/

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

/s/

John Boozman
United States Senator

/s/

Sherrod Brown
United States Senator

/s/

Shelley Moore Capito
United States Senator

/s/

Benjamin L. Cardin
United States Senator

/s/

Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

/s/

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

/s/

Kevin Cramer
United States Senator

/s/

Ted Cruz
United States Senator

/s/

Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator

/s/

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

/s/

John Hoeven
United States Senator

/s/

Cindy Hyde-Smith
United States Senator

/s/

Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

/s/

Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

/s/

Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/

Jerry Moran
United States Senator

/s/

Lisa Murkowski
United States Senator

/s/

Marco Rubio
United States Senator

/s/

Kyrsten Sinema
United States Senator

/s/

Dan Sullivan
United States Senator

/s/

John Thune
United States Senator

/s/

Tom Udall
United States Senator

/s/

Ron Wyden
United States Senator