



Testimony of

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Before the
**House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Subcommittee on
Aviation**

Hearing on:

Air Service to Small and Rural Communities

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Chairman LoBiondo, Ranking member Larsen and members of the Subcommittee, thank you for considering my written testimony on the topic of Air Service to Small and Rural Communities.

My name is Pedro Fàbregas, and I am the President and CEO of Envoy Air Inc. Envoy is a wholly owned subsidiary of American Airlines Group. We employ over 14,000 dedicated team members and operate more than 200 regional jet aircraft across the United States, Canada, Mexico and the Caribbean. These aircraft operate under the “American Eagle” brand and provide seamless connecting service to American Airlines’ global network.

We at Envoy are absolutely committed to maintaining the highest standards of safety throughout our operations and to promoting the safety of the nation’s air transportation system. We work closely with the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) and operate in conformity with all applicable Federal Aviation Regulations (FARs).

As you know, the FAA earlier this year implemented FAR 117. One of FAR 117’s main features is to reduce the amount of on-duty and flight time a flight crew can experience each day. Another very significant change to the FARs went into effect in August 2013. It substantially increased the requirements a prospective future airline pilot needs in order to obtain from the FAA an Airline Transport Certificate (ATP).

Specifically, FAR 61 now requires a prospective airline pilot – even when he or she is already a very competent and experienced aviator – is now required to accumulate at least 1,500 hours of log book time *before ever being able to be employed as an airline pilot, even as a First Officer*. Prior to this recent change to FAR 61, First Officers were not subject to the 1,500 hours requirement and were able to fly for an airline based on their commercial certificate, which also reflects their qualifications.

FAR 61’s 1,500 hours requirement is adversely affecting untold numbers of aspiring airline pilots. Many of them have already graduated from accredited universities and colleges that specialize in the education and training of aviators – institutions such as Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, Purdue University, University of North Dakota, Western Michigan University, as well as numerous others. But for FAR 61’s 1,500 hours requirement, these pilots would be ready to enter into our own state-of-the art training program at Envoy, which we have worked so hard over the years to develop collaboratively with the FAA. Unfortunately, these aviators often find themselves needing to put the start of their airline career on hold – while they literally fly in circles accumulating hours in aircraft and operating conditions that are in no-way similar to those they would gain as a First Officer flying under the authority of an experienced airline captain. In addition, this building of hours comes at a heavy financial expense borne by the aviators personally.

This is not only slowing down the career development of these prospective professional pilots, but also is depriving the nation’s air transportation system of skilled crew, especially in the regional airline industry. Combined with the additional staffing restrictions that result from FAR 117, FAR 61’s requirements are creating a shortage of qualified and available pilots.

This has become an obstacle to the industry’s continuing ability to provide regional air service to many small and medium sized communities around the country. Several regional airlines have already reduced their levels of flying, attributing it to the pilot shortage and the pilot shortage is not getting any better. In the relative near term it could well result in additional service cutbacks within the industry, hurting each of those many communities individually – including their residents and employers – and also having a negative impact on the national economy.



Accordingly, I respectfully request the Committee consider amending FAR 61 such that additional consideration be given to the educational background and training that a pilot possesses relative to the number of hours that the pilot has accumulated in their log book. This would not in any way compromise our absolute commitment to safety and it would benefit everyone – including the national economy, numerous local communities around the country that otherwise are at risk of losing service, the regional airlines and the qualified aviators who are facing artificial barriers to enter this esteemed profession.

Pedro Fàbregas
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Envoy Aviation Group Inc. and Envoy Air Inc.