



February 15, 2011

Dear Representative ____:

We would like to express our appreciation and support for this Committee in making FAA Reauthorization a top priority in the 112th Congress. We believe this legislation is vital to moving our nation's air transportation network forward. While each of our organizations have unique perspectives on HR 658, The Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization and Reform Act, we are united in our support for the Essential Air Service program. We urge you to eliminate provisions to cut and ultimately end the Essential Air Service program at airports in the lower 48 United States.

While over three decades have passed since the program's inception, small and rural communities do not rely any less on commercial air service than they did in 1978, when Congress promised them airline deregulation would not disconnect them from the nation's air transportation network.

Cutting Essential Air Service would serve as a deathblow to the economic health of hundreds of small communities across the nation. It is unimaginable that a business would start up in, or relocate to a community where the closest commercial airport is located over two, four, six, or even eight hours away. The loss of commercial air service at these communities would likewise crush existing businesses and would cause even greater numbers of doctors and other skilled professionals – already in short supply in rural areas – to migrate to less isolated communities.

While the consequences of cutting this program will be borne most heavily by those passengers left without air service, reducing the volume of air travel from these communities will carry negative economic consequences for the entire air transportation industry. Of the 435 commercial airports outside of Alaska and Hawaii, 106 of those airports receive air service *only* through the Essential Air Service program. Eliminating the program at those airports would shut down air travel to and from nearly *one quarter of our nation's commercial airports*. The economic impact on our nation's air transportation network, which provides more than 10.9 million direct U.S. jobs and serves over 750 million passengers annually, would be substantial. Moreover, eliminating the program also eliminates the jobs of thousands of employees of those airports and the airlines

serving them.

We understand the fiscal challenges facing our nation. Each of our organizations stands ready to assist with meaningful reform and streamlining of the program to ensure its future success, while practicing fiscal restraint. However, eliminating Essential Air Service outright in the lower 48 states is the wrong thing to do, and now is the worst time to do it. Instead, we urge you to protect these smaller communities and jobs by reauthorizing and restoring the \$200 million annual investment in the Essential Air Service program.

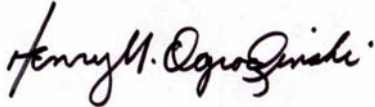
Sincerely,



Greg Principato
President, Airports Council International- North America



Charles Barclay
President, American Association of Airport Executives



Henry Ogrodzinski
President & CEO, National Association of State Aviation of Officials



Roger Cohen
President, Regional Airline Association