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March 5, 2018

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Senate Commerce, Science and
Transportation Committee
511 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Senate Commerce, Science and
Transportation Committee
716 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Aviation Operations, Safety and Security Subcommittee
260 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Aviation Operations, Safety and Security Subcommittee
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune, Ranking Member Nelson, Chairman Blunt, and Ranking Member Cantwell:

We are writing to urge you and your colleagues to ensure that small- and medium-sized communities continue to have safe and reliable commercial air service. Specifically, we are asking you to adopt a reasonable proposal put forward by Commerce Committee Chairman John Thune (R-SD) to help young men and women become effectively trained commercial airline pilots.

Small- and medium-sized communities are continuing to experience commercial air service reductions, in part, because carriers say that there are not enough qualified pilots to operate their flights. Numerous studies and news reports have documented the adverse impacts of the pilot shortage. Unfortunately, more and more communities in rural and less populated areas will continue to lose commercial flights unless Congress acts.

The FAA in 2013 issued a rule that requires first officers to accumulate 1,500 hours of flight time to obtain an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate. As part of that decision, the agency allowed pilots to receive a restricted ATP with fewer hours including military pilots with 750 hours, graduates holding a bachelor's degree in aviation with 1,000 hours, and graduates holding an associate's degree in aviation with 1,200 hours.

When the Senate Commerce Committee considered the FAA reauthorization bill last year, it adopted an amendment offered by Chairman Thune to create another pathway toward the 1,500-hour requirement. Senator Thune's thoughtful and reasonable approach would allow pilots to earn credit toward the 1,500-hour requirement through airline-sponsored training courses.

Specifically, the Thune proposal would open the door for airlines to provide structured and disciplined training courses if the FAA determines that the training would enhance aviation safety. This modest approach would keep the 1,500-hour rule intact, improve pilot training, and enhance aviation safety by focusing on quality of flight hours rather than the quantity of flight hours.

Three separate panels of aviation stakeholders and community leaders in the past year have come up with similar proposals. In June 2017, a Department of Transportation Working Group recommended that first officers receive hours of credit for "carrier-specific and aircraft-type-specific training and testing." In October, the FAA's Air Carrier Training

Advisory Rulemaking Committee, similarly recommended that pilots receive credit for completing an “air carrier enhanced qualification program.”

Aviation stakeholders and community leaders have come up with reasonable approaches that would simultaneously address the pilot shortage and enhance aviation safety. It’s time that Congress do its part to help small- and medium-sized communities preserve commercial air service. We urge you to adopt the Thune proposal and take other steps to address the pilot shortage when you resume consideration of the FAA reauthorization bill.

Thank you for attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



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President and Chief Executive Officer
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Boise Airport



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Bill Connors
President & CEO
Boise Metro Chamber of Commerce



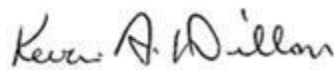
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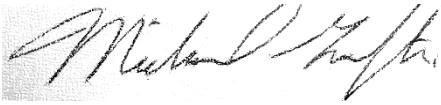
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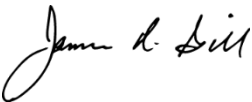
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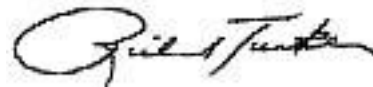
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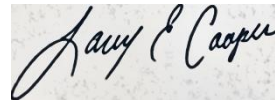
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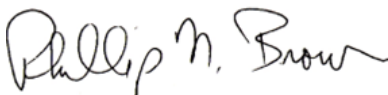
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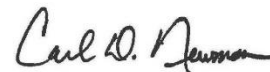
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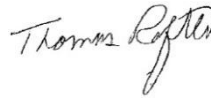
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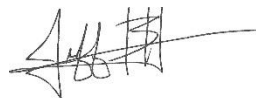
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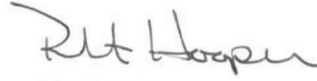
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