



January 31, 2024

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
Chairwoman
U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairwoman Foxx,

As organizations representing a broad range of aviation stakeholders, we write to express our strong support for several flight education-related provisions in H.R. 6951, the *College Cost Reduction Act*. This language would greatly assist students receiving an education to become a commercial airline pilot. By allowing certified, high-quality undergraduate programs that provide flight training to access loan amounts for graduate professional programs, this bill will make it possible for more people, especially those not well represented in the industry, to pursue the pilot profession. This legislation will also help ensure that the commercial aviation industry can meet the robust long-term demand for air service across the country. H.R. 6951 recognizes the unique nature of these undergraduate programs and the importance of building the pilot pipeline for a thriving U.S. economy.

Despite our collective efforts to grow the pipeline, the high cost of flight education and training remains the chief barrier to convincing individuals to pursue the pilot career path. According to the University Aviation Association, collegiate flight training typically adds on average \$80,000 in additional expenses to a two and four-year degree. With the average cost of tuition and fees at

a public, in-state institution for a bachelor's degree at approximately \$40,000,¹ this translates to at least \$120,000 for a professional pilot degree. Most students and their families do not have the means or strong enough credit to borrow expensive private loans. By increasing the amount of student loan aid available to qualifying programs, the *College Cost Reduction Act* helps to make the pilot profession more accessible.

There has never been a better and more critical time to become a pilot. Demand for pilots is expected to be robust for years to come. While the career path is expensive, the return on investment is high. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary for airline pilots is approximately \$211,790 per year as of 2022.² Flight education students are very likely to get a high-paying job that will put them on a path to upward mobility and will be able to repay these student loans. That is why it makes sense to treat these programs as they are – professional licensure programs.

A robust aviation industry requires a steady supply of high-quality pilots – H.R. 6951 puts forward a commonsense solution to make the pilot career track more accessible. We thank you and Rep. Chavez DeRemer for your leadership on this issue and for recognizing the unique and important nature of flight education programs. We support this bill moving through committee and are ready to assist as it moves forward in the process.

Sincerely,

Airlines for America
American Association of Airport Executives
Cargo Airline Association
Flight School Association of North America
Global Business Travel Association
International Air Transport Association
National Air Carrier Association
National Association of State Aviation Officials
National Business Aviation Association
National Flight Training Alliance
Regional Air Cargo Carriers Association
Regional Airline Association
Southwest Airlines Pilot Association
U.S. Travel Association

¹ See: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/paying-for-college-infographic>

² <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/transportation-and-material-moving/airline-and-commercial-pilots.htm#tab-5>