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Subject: FW: NEWS: Ranking Member Cohen's Statement from Hearing on Strengthening Aviation Workforce
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Good morning –

This release provides perspective on the aviation workforce provisions of the recently enacted FAA reauthorization bill. This may be of interest to Miramar College and other institutions involved in developing an alliance of California community colleges with aviation programs.

Tom

From: Transportation & Infrastructure Democrats
Sent: Wednesday, July 10, 2024 11:05 AM
To: Tom Downs
Subject: NEWS: Ranking Member Cohen's Statement from Hearing on Strengthening Aviation Workforce



For Immediate Release: July 10, 2024

Ranking Member Cohen's Statement from Hearing on Strengthening Aviation Workforce

Washington, D.C. — The following are opening remarks, as prepared for delivery, from Ranking Member of the Subcommittee on Aviation Steve Cohen

(D-TN), during today's hearing titled, "Eliminating Bottlenecks: Examining Opportunities to Recruit, Retain, and Engage Aviation Talent."

Video of Cohen's opening statement can be found [here](#).

More information on the hearing can be found [here](#).

Ranking Member Cohen:

Thank you, Chairman Graves, and thank you to all of our witnesses for testifying today.

Now that we have successfully passed an overwhelmingly bipartisan FAA reauthorization bill, we must turn our attention to implementing it.

There are widespread and well documented aviation workforce challenges, spanning positions from airline pilots and air traffic controllers to aviation maintenance technicians, aviation safety inspectors and designated pilot examiners.

Shortages of these vital members of the workforce have resulted in a subpar experience across the aviation ecosystem, which is why our FAA reauthorization bill provides support for all of these groups.

It reauthorizes and increases funding for workforce development programs for aircraft pilots and aviation maintenance technicians and creates a new eligibility for aviation manufacturing workers.

Establishing and funding these critical programs will help build a pipeline for the next generation of these members of the aviation workforce.

As for controllers, the number of certified professional controllers had been trending downward in the decade prior to the pandemic.

During the pandemic, the temporary suspension of training at the FAA Academy, which prepares air traffic controllers for their jobs, significantly increased the time required to certify controllers.

The FAA is now slowly recovering from that pause, though there is still much

work to be done, as most facilities across the country have a shortage of air traffic controllers.

Historical staffing challenges facing air traffic organization technicians, such as increased workload without additional resources and training, exacerbate these ongoing workforce bottlenecks.

That is why our FAA reauthorization bill includes provisions to maximize controller hiring, improve staffing models and expand the FAA's resources to meet the evolving needs of the air traffic system.

I have also recently learned of a need in certain areas, including in my district of Memphis, Tennessee, of designated pilot examiners or DPEs.

DPEs provide required practical tests, or checkrides, for aspiring pilots, but their uneven distribution throughout the country and the limited incentives to serve as a DPE can pose scheduling challenges for pilot candidates.

The FAA reauthorization bill will help streamline the process of obtaining a checkride by creating an FAA office to facilitate national coordination of DPEs and by improving the agency's DPE search tool to provide more information about the credentials, qualifications and availability of designated pilot examiners.

Mental health is another issue that directly impacts the aviation workforce and the safety of our aviation system.

Pilots and air traffic controllers often do not get the help they need for mental health issues due to the consequences of speaking up or seeking treatment.

Consequences can include a revocation of or delays in receiving medical clearances, which can result in a period of not working for multiple months.

Our aviation sector must better support the mental health of our aviation workforce to ensure public safety in the air and on the ground.

The FAA reauthorization bill requires the establishment of an aeromedical innovation and modernization working group, which will review and make

recommendations to the agency's medical processes, including policies on mental health protocols, education and outreach.

The law also creates a task group to monitor and evaluate the FAA's efforts to assist and provide more resources for the aviation workforce.

We must ensure robust development of and support for all aviation workers, as they play a critical role in keeping our aviation system operating safely and efficiently.

Thank you again to our witnesses for being here today, and I look forward to our discussion.

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