

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

June 7, 2018

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

It has come to our attention that this morning, you called on Congress to change the heightened experience requirements for commercial airline co-pilots. We are writing you today to express our extreme disappointment in your request.

In your comments, you stated that regional airlines attribute their pilot shortage to the First Officer Qualification (FOQ) Rule. We would like to remind you that these heightened experience requirements have been in place since 2013, giving pilots and airlines ample time to comply with this regulation. Claims that changes to this rule are necessary to ameliorate a supposed pilot shortage ignore the meager salaries and less-than-ideal working conditions that have been characteristic of regional airlines for well over two decades. These historical factors are the true drivers of any difficulties that these airlines may be having in attracting qualified first officer applicants.

In 2014, GAO issued a report, *Aviation Workforce: Current and Future Availability of Airline Pilots*, which concluded that among many factors in the supposed pilot shortage, regional airlines were not offering competitive salaries. As a result, fewer pilots were entering the field. Another GAO Report released on May 2018 titled, *Collegiate Aviation Schools: Stakeholders' Views on Challenges for Initial Pilot Training Programs*, shows that out of 18 selected aviation colleges, none of them reported the training requirements as a great challenge to their ability to produce pilots. The myth of a pilot shortage due to higher entry level experience requirements created by regional airlines is simply that, a myth.

We would also like to remind you that the *Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010* (PL.111-216), which codified these regulations into law was the result of a bipartisan action to prioritize aviation safety after the tragic crash of Colgan Air Flight 3407 in Clarence Center, N.Y. There is no valid argument that this legislation has not kept our flying public safe. In fact, since this law was enacted, the United States has experienced zero commercial airline fatalities caused by pilot error. This period of over eight years with no fatal crashes represents the longest such period in U.S. aviation history by over three times.

From pilot fatigue guidelines to new training methods for pilots, the *Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010* and the enhanced first officer experience requirements have helped achieve *One Level of Safety* among our nation's regional and mainline carriers and gone a long way in preventing accidents like that of Flight 3407.

We respectfully request that you continue to look for real solutions to bring more pilots into the pipeline, such as your recent veteran pilot initiative. Collectively, the Airline Safety Act and the rules that have emanated from it, in particular the FOQ rule, have saved countless lives over the years and should remain as Congress originally intended.

Sincerely,



CHRIS COLLINS
Member of Congress



CHARLES E. SCHUMER
United States Senator



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress



KIRSTEN GILLIBRAND
United States Senator



TOM REED
Member of Congress