

July 20, 2018

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman
Senate Commerce Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bill Nelson
Ranking Member
Senate Commerce Committee
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Roy Blunt
Chairman
Senate Subcommittee on Aviation Operations,
Safety, and Security
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Ranking Member
Senate Subcommittee on Aviation Operations,
Safety, and Security
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Aviation Industry Urges Inclusion of Inhofe-Blumenthal-Moran-Cantwell
Aviation Workforce Development Pilot Program (S. 2506) in FAA Reauthorization**

Dear Chairmen Thune and Blunt and Ranking Members Nelson and Cantwell:

The U.S. aviation industry is facing a technical worker shortage that threatens to undermine the growth and competitiveness of one of the most important sectors of our economy.

With that in mind, the undersigned 29 organizations, representing a broad cross-section of the industry and communities around the country with prominent aviation sectors, strongly support S. 2506. The legislation, which was introduced by Senators James Inhofe, Richard Blumenthal, Jerry Moran and Maria Cantwell and is cosponsored by 17 others, would establish a new aviation technical workforce development pilot program. We urge that S. 2506 be included in the Senate's Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reauthorization bill (S. 1405).

The Inhofe-Blumenthal-Moran-Cantwell bill will incentivize businesses, labor organizations, schools and governmental entities to work together to pursue innovative new strategies to develop technical talent and encourage workers to pursue aviation careers. Given the scale of the challenge facing companies around the country, the legislation could not be timelier.

An analysis by Boeing suggests that 118,000 new technicians will be needed in North America over the next two decades. The consulting firm Oliver Wyman has forecast that demand for aviation maintenance technicians will outstrip supply by 2022. The Aviation Technician Education Council (ATEC) recently determined that new entrants make up just two percent of the aviation technician population annually, while 30 percent of the workforce is at or near retirement age. The results of the Aeronautical Repair Station Association's (ARSA) 2018 member survey further illustrate the problem:

- More than 80 percent of respondents report difficulty finding qualified technicians and more than half of responding companies have unfilled positions.
- As a result, companies say it is taking longer to complete work for customers (80 percent), that their companies are not adding new technical capabilities (28 percent), and, in some cases, that their companies are turning down new business (20 percent).
- It's no surprise that with two-thirds of respondents wanting to expand their workforces this year, "difficulty finding and retaining technical talent" has been identified by ARSA members as one of the most significant strategic threats to growth and profitability.

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The U.S. aviation industry is a diamond in the crown of our economy. Working together, manufacturers, operators, maintainers, labor organizations, schools and workers have built an industry that provides unprecedented mobility for people and goods. S. 2506 will help ensure our member organizations have the technical professionals they need to grow, compete globally, and, most importantly, continue to ensure the safety of civil aviation aircraft. We therefore unanimously urge you to include it in FAA reauthorization legislation.

Thank you for your consideration and leadership.

Sincerely,

Aeronautical Repair Station Association
Aerospace Industries Association
Aerospace Maintenance Council
Aircraft Electronics Association
Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
Airlines for America
American Association of Airport Executives
Aviation Council of Pennsylvania
Aviation Suppliers Association
Aviation Technician Education Council
Cargo Airline Association
Coalition of Airline Pilots Associations
General Aviation Manufacturers Association
Greater Miami Aviation Association
Helicopter Association International
International Air Transport Association
International Brotherhood of Teamsters
Modification and Replacement Parts Association
National Air Carrier Association
National Air Transportation Association
National Association of State Aviation Officials
National Business Aviation Association
National League of Cities
Professional Aviation Maintenance Association
Regional Air Cargo Carriers Association
Regional Airline Association
South Florida Aviation Maintenance Council
Westchester Aircraft Maintenance Association