



AIR LINE PILOTS ASSOCIATION, INTERNATIONAL

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THE WORLD'S LARGEST PILOTS UNION | WWW.ALPA.ORG

April 8, 2021

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

On behalf of the more than 59,000 members of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA), I would like to affirm our commitment to working with you and your team to foster a safe, competitive, modern, and resilient transportation system—as you described in your recent testimony before the U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee. Airline pilots are enthusiastic about building on our contributions to the U.S. airline industry's efforts to produce lower emissions; ensure that air transportation is accessible for all Americans; and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion in its workforce.

As ALPA celebrates its 90th anniversary this year, we offer as a resource our pilots' experience and expertise in virtually every aspect of air transportation. As airline pilots flying in the national airspace system, we would like to provide our unique perspectives to help form the foundation of an industrywide effort to create a more diverse and inclusive air transportation workforce, while ensuring that the United States continues to stand as the unquestioned global leader in aviation safety.

ALPA believes that action in several critical areas will allow the United States to break down barriers to foster a more diverse and inclusive aviation workforce that reflects the communities and customers our industry serves. To do more to ensure that the piloting profession is welcoming and accessible to all, particularly those who have traditionally been underrepresented in our career, ALPA would like to work with you to

- Align federal funding support for the education required to become an airline pilot with that of other highly skilled professions by
 - Authorizing and increasing federal educational aid programs such as the Pell Grant Program to provide financial assistance to students pursuing two- and four-year degrees at post-secondary higher education institutions to cover the costs of aviation flight training.
 - Creating a student loan cancellation program that allows airline pilots to work for a specific period in exchange for loan forgiveness for airlines that serve the public need, including those that provide humanitarian relief through organizations, such as Air Serv International or Doctors Without Borders, and advance public health through the World Health Organization.

- Reviewing government guidelines to increase the number and amounts of subsidized loans available to students for flight training and ensure students who receive unsubsidized loans do not accrue interest on the loans while in school.
- Make aviation education more accessible to minorities and underrepresented groups by
 - Providing federal grants to Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) that want to start aviation professional flight degree programs or those that already offer two- and four-year degrees that include flight training and want to expand their programs.
 - Providing federal support to other colleges and universities that serve underrepresented communities to begin aviation degree programs that include flight training.

As we work to expand and diversify our industry's highly skilled, trained, and experienced pilot workforce, ALPA is also committed to furthering the dignity of work by insisting on an inclusive workplace for aviation employees irrespective of race, gender, religion, national origin, sexual orientation, or other diversity traits. We are currently participating in the Federal Aviation Administration's Women in Aviation Advisory Board and partnering with other government entities to help coordinate and maximize federal resources in outreach efforts to encourage students in underrepresented communities to consider the piloting profession as viable and accessible.

The United States must also address economic disincentives that currently exist for pilots considering employment at regional airlines, which serve as a main avenue for individuals to enter the profession. ALPA is focused on improving this entry point to the piloting career while maintaining the first officer qualification requirements that have helped make U.S. air transportation the safest mode of transportation in the world. Some may argue that we should lower the safety bar to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in the piloting profession, but we reject this false choice. ALPA believes we can—and must—do more as a nation to open the doors of opportunity for those currently underrepresented in the piloting profession *and* maintain the highest safety standards in the world.

We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to offer our recommendations and learn your perspective on these ideas and others to help our nation build a strong, inclusive U.S. pilot and aviation workforce for the future.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Joseph G. DePete". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Captain Joseph G. DePete, President
Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l