



August 1, 2023

The Honorable Chuck Schumer
Senate Majority Leader
322 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
Chair, Senate Committee on Commerce, Science & Technology
524 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Tammy Duckworth
Chair, Subcommittee on Aviation Safety,
Operations & Innovation
511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Leader Schumer, Chair Cantwell, and Chair Duckworth:

Thirteen years ago, Congress passed bipartisan legislation that brought about a revolution in air safety that has made America's skies the safest in the world. Your tireless leadership since then to resist the many efforts by special interests to weaken that landmark law has saved countless lives and cemented the United States as the gold standard in aviation safety. Your extraordinary efforts have been particularly critical as Congress considers the current Federal Aviation Administration reauthorization bill, where you have prioritized the lives the flying public over the calls by some in the aviation industry to lower the bar on safety.

The first officer qualification and training requirements as well as direction to update regulations to address pilot fatigue mandated in the Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010 are working as intended, and our country has experienced a 99.8% reduction in airline fatalities. As the leader of the world's largest aviation safety organization and on behalf of the 74,000 pilots the Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l (ALPA) represents, I write to thank you for your unwavering commitment to defending against the attacks these rigorous pilot training rules face today.

The tragedy of Flight 3407 marked a turning point in our nation's aviation history. Through the determined advocacy of the victims' families, the support of the aviation stakeholders—including ALPA, and with your leadership we developed new rules with the mission of preventing similar tragedies from ever happening again. Thirteen years later, it is clear that those rules work and the devastation of a tragedy like Flight 3407 has not happened in the United States since. The Airline Safety Act of 2010 is remarkable not only for the speed at which it passed and the support it received across political divides, but also for the impact it had at successfully raising the bar to put a stop to similar tragedies. The pilots of ALPA remain eternally grateful to you for what you accomplished to guard against the loss of our passengers, our friends, our families, and even our own lives. The piloting profession and aviation industry are safer and stronger today because of your efforts in 2010.

Unfortunately, special interests are waging an illogical campaign to weaken these life-saving rules. By reducing the amount of actual flight experience first officers have when entering the flight deck of a commercial airline flight for the first time, we risk turning back the clock on aviation safety and undoing the progress that we have made over the last thirteen years. As a captain at a regional airline before 2010, I frequently flew with first officers who had just barely 250 hours of flight experience before being trusted with a plane full of passengers. That was on the job training for them and a betrayal of the high safety standards Americans expect when they board a flight.

I am deeply concerned that proposals being considered by the Senate to reduce these experience and qualification requirements for first officers in the FAA reauthorization process this year could bring us back to those dark days of aviation safety. However, I am optimistic—thanks to your continued and steadfast defense of safety—that we will not turn back the clock on safety.

I am also concerned that there is a rush to introduce new risk into the world's safest aviation system by arbitrarily raising the mandatory pilot retirement age without study or consideration of the operational and collective bargaining implications of making such a significant change. The White House and the U.S. Department of Transportation are opposed to this proposal. Raising the retirement age puts the U.S. in conflict with the mandates of the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) which studied the last age change for five years before implementing it. It would also create training backlogs, reduce pilot utilization, imperil airlines' operational reliability and potentially expose pilot unions and airlines to significant legal liability.

Thank you for the legacy of safety that you have helped to create and protect as special interests attempt to use the FAA reauthorization process to put profits over the safety of your constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'JAM', with a stylized flourish extending from the end.

Capt. Jason Ambrosi
President, Air Line Pilots Association, International