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Oral Testimony Before the
U.S. House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Hearing on
“FAA Reauthorization: Enhancing America’s Gold Standard in Aviation Safety”
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Thank you, Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, and committee members. I am Captain Jason Ambrosi, president of the Air Line Pilots Association, Int’l, which represents more than 67,000 pilots in the United States and Canada, and I remain a current and qualified international captain on the Boeing 767.

Like many airline pilots, I began my career flying for a regional airline. I was hired by Delta Air Lines in 2000, eighteen months before the terrorist attacks of 9/11 would change our industry forever.

The loss of Continental Flight 3407, in which 50 people died near Buffalo, New York, also changed our industry forever. Later this week, we will mark the 14th anniversary of that accident. It was the final in a series of tragedies that led this nation to commit to becoming the gold standard in aviation safety.

The passage of the 2010 FAA bill played a critical role in our nation’s achievement of this goal. Because of it, U.S. air transportation benefits from landmark safety improvements such as pilot qualification, experience, and training requirements and Safety Management Systems based on enhanced voluntary safety reporting programs. Through the bill, Congress also ensured U.S. pilots have science-based fatigue rules, and training in areas such as mentoring and leadership, high-altitude operations, adverse weather, and stall prevention and recovery.

These and other safety improvements in the 2010 FAA bill—and the presence of at least two experienced and trained pilots working on every airliner flight deck—have been critical. Collaborative efforts by labor, industry, and government have also been key. Safety programs like CAST and ASIAS have been game-changers that apply state-of-the-art analytics to aviation, and position the United States on the leading edge of safety analysis.

Together, these advancements have brought us to where we are today. It’s no accident that the airline passenger fatality rate has dropped by 99.8 percent since the law was passed in 2010. We’ve set the gold standard—and I know we share a common goal of ensuring we never accept silver or bronze.

This extraordinary record demonstrates that the current system is working in the way it was intended. The United States is creating thousands of new pilots each year who have the experience and training they need to ensure this nation maintains its place as the global safety leader.

As an airline pilot who has flown for more than twenty-five years and worked for both regional and mainline carriers, I can tell you that all U.S. airline passengers deserve “one level of safety.” In the upcoming FAA reauthorization, Congress has a historic opportunity to maintain and expand this country’s global leadership in safety for *all* Americans, whether they fly out of major hubs or small, rural airports.

We thank the Committee for passing the Aircraft Certification Reform bill to improve the entire aircraft certification system. Continuing to modernize the air traffic infrastructure and NOTAM system is also important. We urge lawmakers to consider modernization funding that spans multiple reauthorization and appropriation cycles, so that the FAA has stable, long-term resources to increase aviation safety and efficiency.

The U.S. air transportation system’s gold standard of safety has made this country a global leader. But this nation can never become complacent about aviation safety, especially as we work to integrate new and expanding users into the shared national airspace. Any new technology, system, or change in procedure or regulation must maintain or improve the current level of safety.

We know that this Committee is interested in inspiring more young people to consider aviation professions, and we applaud you for your effort because it’s a great time to be an airline pilot. ALPA hopes the reauthorization process can also create more opportunities for people of all backgrounds to become airline pilots. Lawmakers can align federal funding support for the education required to become an airline pilot with that of other highly skilled professions, and make aviation education more accessible to minorities and underrepresented groups.

ALPA is ready to work with all aviation stakeholders to keep this country leading the world in aviation safety, open the doors of opportunity for everyone who aspires to fly, and ensure that communities, large and small, have the safe air service they deserve. Thank you.