

March 5, 2018

The Honorable James Inhofe
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

**Aviation Industry Strongly Supports Inhofe Aviation
Workforce Development Pilot Program Bill**

Dear Senators Inhofe, Blumenthal, Moran, 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 17 organizations, representing a broad cross-section of the industry, strongly support your legislation to establish an aviation technical workforce development pilot program.

Your legislation would 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 in Oklahoma, Connecticut, Kansas, Washington, and elsewhere around the country, your proposal 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 preliminary results of the 2018 member survey currently being conducted by the Aeronautical Repair Station Association (ARSA) 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 (78 percent), that their companies are not adding new technical capabilities (30 percent), and, in some cases, that their companies are turning down new business (17 percent).

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- It's no surprise that with almost three quarters 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.

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. Your legislation 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.

Thank you for your leadership. We stand ready to assist you in enacting your bill into law.

Sincerely,

Aeronautical Repair Station Association
Aerospace Industries Association
Aerospace Maintenance Council
Aircraft Electronics Association
Aircraft Mechanics Fraternal Association
Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association
A4A
Aviation Suppliers Association
Aviation Technician Education Council
Cargo Airline Association
General Aviation Manufacturers Association
Helicopter Association International
Modification and Replacement Parts Association
National Air Carrier Association
National Air Transportation Association
Professional Aviation Maintenance Association
Regional Airline Association