

September 26, 2018

The Honorable Steve Knight  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce  
House Small Business Committee  
2361 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Stephanie Murphy  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce  
House Small Business Committee  
2069 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Knight and Ranking Member Murphy:

As the Small Business Committee's Subcommittee on Contracting and Workforce receives testimony from small businesses on the pilot and mechanic shortages in the aviation industry, the National Air Transportation Association (NATA) writes to express our support for today's hearing, "Troubled Skies: The Aviation Workforce Shortage's Impact on Small Businesses." Aviation businesses are continuously seeking to hire skilled pilots and mechanics, however the gap between supply and demand is increasing and small aviation businesses are finding fewer opportunities to support the activity needed to maintain business. A study produced by Pricewaterhouse Coopers notes that the general aviation industry produces nearly 1.2 million jobs.<sup>1</sup> This shortage is putting a strain on the general aviation businesses that support them, most of whom are small businesses.

NATA represents the interests of the general aviation business community before Congress and federal, state and local government agencies. Our nearly 2,300 member companies provide a broad range of aeronautical services to the aviation community. Smaller companies account for the majority of NATA's membership and most NATA members have fewer than 40 employees and are designated as small businesses by the U.S. Small Business Administration.

### **Pilot Shortage**

The debate over a pilot shortage has gained traction in recent years, and the general aviation community continues to feel the effects of a shortage of qualified pilots to meet demand. Boeing predicts that over 637,000 new pilots will need to join the workforce in the next twenty years, and as drones and other unmanned aerial vehicles enter the market, as well as the increasing

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<sup>1</sup> PricewaterhouseCoopers. (2015, February). Contribution of General Aviation to the U.S. Economy in 2013. Retrieved from <http://nata.aero/data/files/gia/2015-general-aviation-contribution-to-us-economy.pdf>

rate of pilots who plan to retire over the next few years, the number of pilots needed to meet demand will continue to rise.<sup>2</sup>

Decades ago, students who wanted to be pilots in an industry where there were few jobs available were willing to do whatever it took to be a pilot. Today, pilots-in-training who enter the workforce have more opportunities presented to them and can pick and choose the job that offers the best pay and long-term career path. Undoubtedly, most pilots are attracted to the life of an airline pilot, where the long-term economics and big business benefits appear more palatable. The general aviation community continues to find ways to attract pilots to the industry – from NATA’s Young Aviation Business Professionals events to support of industry programs and grant opportunities – to broaden the horizons of the next generation of aviation professionals who seek a small business-oriented lifestyle.

### **Maintenance Shortage**

Currently, the aviation industry is experiencing a persistent aviation technical worker shortage that threatens to undermine the efficiency of aviation operations, manufacturing, and maintenance. A Boeing analysis suggests that 118,000 new aviation maintenance technicians will be needed in North America over the next two decades,<sup>3</sup> and the consulting firm Oliver Wyman forecasts that demand for aviation maintenance technicians will outstrip supply by 2022.<sup>4</sup> A mass retirement of maintenance technicians is looming, and without an adequate number of qualified replacements, airplanes will not be able to fly and small businesses around the country will lose money and opportunities.

Becoming an aviation mechanic requires dedication, money, and time. As new airplanes enter the market, the need for skilled aviation mechanics who understand the new technologies will be more important than ever. Supporting those who wish to pursue a career in mechanics and showing younger generations that becoming a mechanic is more than someone who just fixes broken airplanes is important to bringing new talent into the industry.

### **Finding a Solution**

The path to becoming a pilot or mechanic is time-consuming, expensive and requires financial and motivational support from outside sources to help those interested in pursuing these career paths move forward. In recent years, the general aviation community – from aviation businesses, manufacturers, general aviation pilots to business aviation – has come together to educate the next generation of professionals on the long-term economics and viability of choosing a job in the aviation industry outside of the major airlines. For example, NATA is

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<sup>2</sup> Boeing. (2017, July 24). Boeing Global Services Forecasts 1.2 Million Pilots and Technicians Needed by 2036. Retrieved from <http://boeing.mediaroom.com/2017-07-24-Boeing-Global-Services-Forecasts-1-2-Million-Pilots-and-Technicians-Needed-by-2036>

<sup>3</sup> Boeing. (2018). Pilot and Technician Outlook 2018-2037. Retrieved from <http://www.boeing.com/commercial/market/pilot-technician-outlook/>


<sup>4</sup> Prentice, Brian and Costanza, Derek. Oliver Wyman. (2017). Aviation Growth is Outpacing Labor Capacity. Retrieved from <https://www.oliverwyman.com/our-expertise/insights/2017/sep/oliver-wyman-transport-and-logistics-2017/operations/aviation-growth-is-outpacing-labor-capacity.html>

currently working with the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) to explore options to provide CAP Cadets education and experiences within the GA Industry. Possible programs include adapting existing NATA Safety 1<sup>st</sup> training for use within the CAP Cadet program and creating an educational track that would allow cadets to visit NATA member companies to explore career options within the many lines of business in GA.

However, much more needs to be done, and fortunately Congress has taken notice of the widening gap within the industry. A bipartisan group of Representatives and Senators have introduced numerous pieces of legislation to address the shortages by updating outdated training programs and establishing pilot programs to support the next generation of aviation professionals.

Again, we appreciate the work that went into this hearing that we believe will result in tangible benefits to bringing this important issue to light. We thank the Subcommittee for its consideration of our views and stand ready to provide more information that will bring a better understanding of how the pilot and aviation mechanic shortages affect small aviation businesses around the country.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gary Dempsey". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "G" and "D".

Gary Dempsey  
President

National Air Transportation Association