



STATEMENT OF THE

NATIONAL BUSINESS AVIATION ASSOCIATION

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PRESIDENT AND CEO**

BEFORE

THE COMMITTEE ON TRANSPORTATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON AVIATION

THE UNITED STATES HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

REGARDING:

**“FAA REAUTHORIZATION ACT OF 2024: STAKEHOLDER PERSPECTIVES ON
IMPLEMENTATION ONE YEAR LATER”**

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Chairman Nehls, Ranking Member Cohen, and members of the Subcommittee on Aviation, thank you for holding this hearing to address aviation safety and the bipartisan 2024 FAA Reauthorization bill. On behalf of the National Business Aviation Association's (NBAA's) 11,000-member companies, I am honored to testify at this hearing.

I would like to start by acknowledging the heartbreaking accident that took place in the shadow of our nation's Capital on January 29th. As members of the aviation community we feel and mourn the loss of every crewmember and every passenger. Our hearts go out to the victims and their families. Every incident and accident is a solemn reminder that our work to improve safety in the national airspace system (NAS) is not done.

A year ago, Congress, led by this Committee, laid the foundation for a safer, more efficient NAS with a comprehensive, bipartisan five-year FAA Reauthorization bill that:

- Included the first ever General Aviation (GA) Title;
- Enhances flight security;
- Ushers in the next generation of aircraft;
- Modernizes medical standards, allowing crewmembers to get the help they need;
- Upgrades the NOTAM system; and
- Develops the future workforce.

With the Reauthorization bill now the law of the land, the path forward is clear.

One, we must ensure the implementation of the bill. The good news is that, with the strong oversight of this Committee, that is beginning to happen. For example, the FAA has already published the rules for operating powered-lift air taxis and evaluated check pilot requirements.

Two, we urgently need to make a massive investment in our national airspace system—in people, facilities, and equipment.

On May 8th, Secretary Duffy unveiled the Administration's Air Traffic Control (ATC) Modernization Plan. It is a plan that is unique from any before it—in its scope, specificity, accountability, and the fact that it establishes a clear deadline. By the end of 2028, the plan calls for an investment in people that will provide the United States with over 14,000 well-trained and highly skilled air traffic controllers. The plan calls for us to invest in facilities by building six new state-of-the-art air traffic control centers, and new radars, radios, and other equipment.

The investment in people, facilities, and equipment that the Administration is proposing is a national imperative. The system is under stress. We are at a unique moment in time—one that calls us to honor the legacy of those we've lost and to meet the challenges with American innovation, ingenuity and decisive action.

The entirety of the aviation industry, including airlines, general aviation, airports, and labor has come together, through the Modern Skies Coalition, in support of the ATC modernization plan. Not since the establishment of the Airport & Airway Trust Fund in 1970 has the entire aviation

industry been this united and focused in its support for major investment in our air transportation system.

Importantly, the Coalition has stated that it opposes any effort that would distract from the Administration's plan. That includes any effort to model the U.S. system on the type of overhyped and dramatically underperforming models in Canada and the United Kingdom.

We are world leaders in every aspect of aviation. We have the opportunity to ensure that is true for decades to come.

GA Action on Safety

These recent events serve as a stark reminder of the critically important role of safety. The business aviation industry holds safety as a core value guiding our actions every day and every flight. Despite the perception based on recent high-profile events, fatal accidents are trending down. Preliminary data indicates there were fewer fatal accidents in the first part of 2025 than 2024. This continues a longer trend. Over the past 30 years, the GA fatal accident rate fell by 60%. Still, NBAA and the general aviation community are committed to further reducing the fatal accident rate. The General Aviation Joint Safety Committee set a goal in 2019 to reduce the fatal accident rate by an additional 10%. The community remains on pace to exceed that safety goal.

The business aviation community works hard not only to be safe, but to be perceived as safe. In response to incidents and accidents this year, the general aviation community launched a National Pause for General Aviation Safety to reflect on safety and commit to working together towards further improvements.

NBAA and others have teamed up to make tools and resources available. For instance, the Aviation Safety Information Analysis and Sharing (ASIAS) program allows the entire aviation community to pool data for beneficial safety improvements. As data analysis tools become more accessible, we expect this tool to become even more important. NBAA is also supporting increased use of data sharing to continually refine safety training; recommitment to a just-culture framework for accident assessment; and continued adoption and implementation of safety management systems (SMS).

Modernizing ATC: A National Imperative

The ATC system is in urgent need of an infrastructure overhaul and staffing support. In addition to the implementation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Congress and the administration can help improve the safety and efficiency of the NAS by advancing DOT's ATC modernization plan.

Modernizing America's ATC infrastructure is essential for enabling the numerous advantages of business aviation in the United States. We thank you for committing \$12.5 billion as a downpayment towards infrastructure improvements and air traffic controller hiring. It will enable the modernization of critical infrastructure such as air traffic control towers, terminal approach

facilities and centers, radar and ground stations, telecommunications hardware, and automation software. It will help retain and recruit controllers, and accelerate training for new recruits—strengthening a workforce that is stretched thin. However, the system needs \$18.5 billion in additional funding over the next three years, to make these urgent capital improvements and realize the benefits of modern technology or we will repeat the failures of the past. Minor investments over multiple decades led to a system that required the “dumbing down” of new technology to integrate into old legacy systems, never allowing the NAS to enjoy the full benefit of cutting edge tools and equipment.

NBAA and the Modern Skies Coalition are unified in our support for this historic funding infusion. However, the Coalition is aligned against privatizing the air traffic control system. Privatized foreign air traffic control systems held up as models of modernization suffer from controller shortages, massive system delays, technology breakdowns, and repeated calls for transparency and leadership. Most alarmingly, the International Civil Aviation Organization recently found that Canada's safety oversight of Nav Canada has fallen dramatically over the past twenty years, assigning a “C” grade to the agency. Instead, we are committed to investing in the safety and efficiency of the nation’s air transportation system.

These investments ensure the FAA has the tools, facilities, workforce and equipment it needs to safely manage 50,000 flights daily, transporting more than 2.9 million passengers across 29 million square miles of airspace.

It will enable business aviation to continue transporting people and cargo, conducting air medical flights for organs and patients, providing natural disaster response and helping businesses be more competitive—connecting communities in every state and nearly every congressional district, especially those with little or no airline service. Business aviation bolsters our national economy with 1.3 million American jobs and \$340 billion in economic output.

Prioritizing FAA Reauthorization Implementation

As important as ATC modernization is the implementation of the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, which recognizes the importance of the General Aviation sector and the safe integration of new entrants, it also ensures that America will continue to lead the world in aviation safety, security, sustainability, innovation, workforce development and investment in airports.

Overdue Overhaul of NOTAM System

The FAA is in the midst of making long-needed improvements to the Notice to Airmen (NOTAM) system. When the nation’s air traffic came to a halt for the first time since 9/11, it became clear we could not wait to overhaul the FAA’s primary tool for notifying pilots and flight planners about hazards en route or at their destination. The FAA expects to deploy the new version of this critical system by September 2025. The welcome upgrade will ensure reliability and better information for flight crews, resulting in higher levels of safety, and there are valuable lessons to be learned in the context of ATC modernization, from the agile acquisition process that was used to implement the new system.

Strengthening Flight Security - Sec. 803

In the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, Congress recognized the importance of flight security by directing the FAA to restrict the publication of personally identifying information that could compromise security. The FAA announced in March an option to not disclose personal security information on the aircraft registry. This action mitigates threats to security, while maintaining the ability to perform necessary functions, such as maintenance, safety checks, and regulatory compliance. The business aviation community is engaging in public comment to ensure the enactment of this provision avoids any unintended consequences, such as restricting access to important information necessary to conduct aircraft transactions and meet other regulatory requirements.

Maintain U.S. Leadership in Advanced Air Mobility - Title IX, Subtitle B

The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 includes the first-ever Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) Subtitle. This accomplishment recognizes the impact of new entrants. As the U.S. competes to lead the world in the era of air taxis, decisive and ambitious action is needed by the FAA, and this bill provides the foundation to do so.

It is crucial to our nation's ability to maintain global competitiveness and leadership in aerospace that innovation be safely and efficiently brought to market in the U.S. The FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024 expressed Congress's desire for the United States to position itself as a global leader in AAM, and directed the FAA to work with manufacturers, prospective operators, and other relevant stakeholders to ensure the safe, expeditious rollout of these aircraft. The FAA must dedicate appropriate staffing to meet this pressing need. Autonomous AAM operations are already happening in China. To maintain our edge, the industry needs established certification standards and the FAA must meet Congress's mandate to work transparently with industry and stick to certification timelines. Only with diligence, transparency, and collaboration will this technology be made in the USA.

Center for Advanced Aviation Technologies - Sec. 961

Senator Cruz recently announced the FAA's new Center for Advanced Aviation Technologies will have a home in Texas. The center of excellence will support the testing and advancement of new and emerging aviation technologies, including autonomous AAM. The support has been welcomed by the innovative new entrants coming to our airspace. Yet, the FAA must accompany the center of excellence with the required demonstration zones and testing corridors, which will allow them to validate technologies and air traffic requirements, or risk falling behind foreign competition.

FAA Research and Development - Sec. 1044

The Reauthorization bill required the FAA to submit a report by February 2025 on the FAA's actions and progress using research and development to inform FAA certification guidance and regulations for autonomous flight and remotely piloted operations beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS). To fully unlock the potential of these new technologies and keep pace with foreign regulators, we need an update on the status of this report and assurance from the FAA that they are prioritizing the integration of autonomous and BVLOS operations.

Powered Lift Special Federal Aviation Regulation - Sec. 955

The FAA made significant progress in ushering in the next generation of aircraft in October 2024, when they published the Powered Lift Special Federal Aviation Regulation (SFAR) in accordance with Section 955 of the Reauthorization at NBAA's Business Aviation Convention and Exhibition. The SFAR included standards for pilot qualifications, established energy reserve requirements, and provided a mechanism for future performance-based rules. While creating the first new aircraft category in two generations is a welcome step, the FAA must continue to ensure requirements match reality as these aircraft gain experience in the years to come.

Autonomous Operations

America has long been the world leader in aviation and innovation. However, our competitive edge is at risk. Other countries are flying powered lift vehicles, and China is conducting autonomous operations. In addition to establishing a national airspace lab like the Center for Advanced Aviation Technologies, the FAA must take steps to ensure autonomous operations will seamlessly integrate into the airspace. Only with appropriate staffing and clear certification guidelines will the FAA facilitate timely entry into service of this historic new aircraft type.

These provisions, with Congress's ongoing oversight and leadership, ensure that America remains the world leader in innovation and aerospace.

Facilitate Scalable SMS Implementation - Sec. 308

The FAA's Part 5 SMS regulation provides a structured framework for operators of all sizes to manage safety risks systematically and effectively. The updated FAA Part 5 SMS regulations expand the requirement for implementing an SMS to more organizations, including Part 91.147 air tour operators and Part 135 on-demand, air charter operators. NBAA and the FAA provide numerous resources to guide operators through the SMS implementation process, aiding compliance with national and international standards in the next two years.

It is imperative that every SMS policy reiterate the scalable nature of SMS. The rule itself is high-level, requiring operators to address the four pillars of SMS: safety policy, safety risk management, safety assurance, and safety promotion. But, the devil is in the details. Alongside the Part 5 regulations, the FAA also updated its advisory circular, inspector guidance, and safety assurance system. Each of these documents must reinforce scalability.

The complexity of policies safety inspectors deem acceptable will drive the burden of this regulation. What works for one operation may not be appropriate for another. Policies that work for a major airline may not be appropriate for a charter operator with a single aircraft and a single Pilot in Command. Regulators may have difficulty understanding what a small – or very small – organization is capable of doing, and how to adjust and adapt the framework so that it can work for everybody

For example, some businesses elect to certificate their flight department under part 135, opting for the oversight and higher safety standards. When, prior to the mandatory rule, some of these

certificated business flight departments opted to seek FAA approval of voluntary SMS, some FAA inspectors had difficulty understanding that these organizations were different from 121 air carriers. The inspectors balked at scaled policies and unique reporting structures. It took months to sort out. Rather than focus on implementing the safety program, these flight departments were forced to divert resources to fight unclear, unscaled policies.

Getting bogged down in bureaucratic policies will detract from the safety-enhancing capability SMS can provide to flight operations. Congress must continue to oversee the FAA's implementation of scalable SMS requirements.

Embrace Modern Medical Protocols - Sec. 411 and 413

Medical processes and understanding continuously undergo review and evaluation. They evolve with modern science. However, the FAA's protocols and standards remain woefully outdated and in need of reform. Fortunately, the Reauthorization bill directed the FAA to begin modernizing.

The medical modernization efforts are already underway. The FAA concluded a pilot mental health rulemaking committee last year with leadership from NBAA. And, this spring, the FAA kicked off two working groups that will support reviewing medical processes, policies and procedures, ensuring timely and efficient certification of airmen. The modernization effort will result in updates to the Guide for Aviation Medical Examiners. The updates will in turn provide better insight for pilots into what medical examiners are looking for and what might cost the pilot his or her medical.

The medical modernization effort and sufficient staffing of the office remain critical to safety. Pilots and others holding FAA medical certificates must be confident in the medical certification process to feel comfortable seeking the help and treatment they need. An outdated system risks pilots flying with undiagnosed or untreated maladies. An understaffed medical office means pilots needlessly wait for paperwork to be reviewed. A modern, adequately staffed medical certificate program can provide pilots confidence that they will be able to return to the cockpit after visiting a doctor.

Withholding a pilot's medical certificate for mental health or other issues means not only that the pilot cannot pursue a livelihood, it means they cannot feed their families. When a pilot visits a doctor today, the pilot does not know if or when he or she will be able to return to flying. The FAA's head medical professional, Dr. Susan Northrop, has often said that if we can track a delivery pizza order, we should be able to track something so much more important - the review and approval of medical certificates. Congress should continue to monitor the development of this secure medical certification portal and tracker, which will provide insight on if and when pilots can return to their profession.

Harmonize Supplemental Oxygen Rules - Sec. 834

It remains critical that the FAA continue to modernize safety regulations, including regulations related to supplemental oxygen. Sec. 834 directs the FAA to issue a notice of proposed

rulemaking that would harmonize part 135 supplemental oxygen requirements with the rules for part 121. Harmonization will enhance communication, decrease the chances of spreading contagions, reduce fatigue, and reflect the reliability of modern aircraft.

Embrace Digitization and Bring FAA into the 21st Century - Sec. 220

The FAA must continue to modernize. Congress required the FAA to bring three paper based certification processes into the digital era. Within six months of the bill, the FAA must identify three certification processes that could be replaced with internet-based data management processes that allow applicants and the FAA to track progress. Outdated, bureaucratic processes remain a barrier to aerospace innovation and efficient aviation operations. The FAA must begin stepping into the modern era by digitizing analog processes to reduce backlogs and ensure American aviators and American businesses keep up with foreign competitors.

Elevate the Office of Rulemaking - Sec. 202

Congress required the FAA to elevate the agency's rulemaking function by establishing an Assistant Administrator for Rulemaking and Regulatory Improvement. The role is critical for improving safety; establishing priorities aligned with the Administration; reviewing burdensome and inefficient or outdated rules; coordinating with other Federal entities; and promulgating regulatory updates that are in the best interest of the public. The FAA repeatedly claims they only have the capacity to pass a handful of rules each year, so it is imperative that a leader ensures the process is efficient and well prioritized.

Bolster the Aerospace Workforce - Title IV

I commend Congress for its bipartisan collaboration with NBAA and others to include workforce-focused provisions in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024. Investing in a highly trained and dedicated workforce is absolutely paramount not just for industry, but for the citizens, companies and communities that depend on it. By dedicating all of Title IV to workforce development, Congress recognized the importance of addressing the aerospace workforce. This legislation addresses and removes barriers for individuals pursuing careers in aviation, broadens the industry's workforce pipeline, and improves training standards.

Analysts predict that hundreds of thousands of aviation professionals with a diversity of skill sets will be needed in the coming decades. However, barriers to growing the needed workforce include financial obstacles, cultural barriers, and limited access to information. The Youth Access to American Jobs in Aviation Task Force, Bessie Coleman Women in Aviation Advisory Committee, and national strategic plan for aviation workforce development underscore the importance of recruiting, retaining and engaging aviation talent. These initiatives will energize the work needed to remove existing barriers and ensure a large, qualified and diverse cohort of professionals is equipped to lead the industry into the future.

Meeting the Moment

America has the safest, largest, most diverse, and most efficient aviation system in the world. Yet, the system is under stress, which increases risk and decreases efficiency. We must take action. Last year, Congress passed comprehensive, bipartisan legislation that would repair

historic systems, reinforce current programs, and pave the way for the future. We stand ready to help the Congress and the Administration take additional steps to make an urgent investment in ATC modernization.

Thank you to the subcommittee for holding this hearing. NBAA looks forward to working alongside Congress and the FAA to maintain and improve safety in air transportation and ensure the U.S. remains the global leader in aviation.