

**Testimony of Peter J. Bunce**  
**President and CEO, General Aviation Manufacturers Association**  
**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure**  
**Subcommittee on Aviation**  
**“Turbulence Ahead: Consequences of Delaying a Long-Term FAA Bill”**  
**November 30, 2023**

Subcommittee Chairman Garret Graves, Ranking Member Steve Cohen, Chairman Sam Graves, and Ranking Member Rick Larsen, on behalf of the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA) and its member companies, thank you for convening today’s hearing which focuses on the importance of Congress moving at maximum velocity operating speed to enact a long-term Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill. As I testified at the Committee’s kickoff FAA Reauthorization hearing on aviation safety in February, this legislation is critically needed to support FAA leadership, direction, and stability and facilitate the aviation sector’s future path towards increasing levels of safety and innovation.

By way of background, GAMA represents more than 140 of the world’s leading manufacturers of general aviation airplanes and rotorcraft, engines, avionics, advanced air mobility aircraft (AAM), components, and related services and technologies. GAMA members are also providers of maintenance and repair services, fixed-based operations, pilot and maintenance training, and aircraft management companies. GAMA companies have facilities in 48 states and 27 countries.

A recent economic impact study determined that the general aviation industry supports \$247 billion in economic output and 1.2 million jobs in the U.S.<sup>1</sup>

We thank the leadership and members of this committee for their bipartisan collaboration and efforts in facilitating passage of the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in Aviation Act (H.R. 3935)<sup>2</sup>. Your timely work earlier this year reauthorizing the FAA is a tremendous accomplishment and is deeply appreciated and strongly praised by our membership. We support the strong general aviation focus in the bill as general aviation is a critical point of entry for pilots and mechanics interested in careers in the aviation industry as well as a critical technology incubator with benefits not only to general aviation but eventually the entire civil aviation industry.

GAMA also applauds the U.S. Senate confirmation of Mike Whitaker to be FAA Administrator. We commend the Senate for their quick action on his nomination, and want to recognize members of this Committee, particularly Chairman Sam Graves, for their strong advocacy of this nomination.

Administrator Whitaker and the agency face a critical inflection point in furthering our collective efforts to advance aviation safety, sustainability, technology, and innovation. Congress must give the Administrator the tools and support he and the agency need to be successful. Enacting a

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<sup>1</sup> [General Aviation's Contributions to the U.S. Economy](#), 2018 Price Waterhouse Coopers Study on behalf of Aircraft Electronics Association (AEA), Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA), Experimental Aircraft Association (EAA), General Aviation Manufacturers Association (GAMA), Helicopter Association International

<sup>2</sup> [Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act, H.R. 3935, 118th Congress](#)

long-term reauthorization by the end of the year will provide a strong foundation for the agency and set a positive trajectory at an important juncture in time. The significance of enacting a timely passage of a multi-year FAA Reauthorization bill and confirming an FAA Administrator was recently emphasized in a letter from 28 aviation associations.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, this week, the non-governmental members of the FAA Management Advisory Council, of which I am a member, sent a letter<sup>4</sup> to House and Senate leadership emphasizing the importance of action on FAA Reauthorization and a full year appropriations bill for the agency.

For GAMA and its members, the stakes are clear: do we want Administrator Whitaker to spend his time managing lapses in authority and appropriations or focus his time on addressing the agency's significant challenges and taking advantage of opportunities? As we have seen in the past, if action is not taken now, it will have both near-term and long-term impacts and set the agency back substantially.

As this Committee documented during its hearings and oversight, the agency faces deep challenges. These include the considerable turnover and loss of expertise at the agency, compounded by the slow pace of FAA employees returning from remote work and insufficient employee training and mentoring. Additionally, confirming a new Administrator took 19 months and during that time, many positions throughout the agency were without permanent leadership. While some progress has been made, the regulatory process faces continuing backlogs and still needs reform and a better clarification of roles and responsibilities. All of this has hindered FAA

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<sup>3</sup> [FAA Administrator Nomination and Reauthorization Industry Letter](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Private Sector Management Advisory Council Letter](#)

efforts to further its global engagement during a transformative time for aviation. It is imperative that the FAA and the U.S. Congress address these challenges.

We are heartened that both the House-passed FAA Reauthorization bill and the Senate committee leadership bill, and accompanying amendments, focus on many of these key challenges and issues. We look forward to working with policymakers in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion in enacting an FAA Reauthorization that contributes to leadership, direction, and stability at the agency.

H.R. 3935 includes several provisions which we believe will strengthen the management and operation of the FAA, provide strong policy direction, and enhance aviation leadership with aviation authorities around the globe. Specifically, H.R. 3935 includes the establishment of a Deputy Administrator for Programs and Management, a Deputy Administrator for Safety and Operations, and an Associate Administrator for Rulemaking and Regulatory Improvement. This will help better manage delays in confirming new political leadership at the agency as well as facilitating more timely, transparent, and accountable promulgation of rulemaking, policy, guidance, and related materials. The House bill also directs reviews of the regulatory process to gain further improvements.

H.R. 3935 also encourages robust FAA leadership in global civil aviation through engagement with international civil aviation authorities to facilitate validation of product and harmonize requirements and processes with other authorities to the benefit of aviation safety and industry. The House-passed bill also requires development of an FAA strategic plan for international

engagement to measure compliance with international aviation safety agreements, strengthen FAA's international offices' activity as well as improving the delivery of technical assistance. These provisions, from our perspective, will improve global civil aviation safety, environmental sustainability, and facilitate U.S. aerospace competitiveness in this dynamic era of rapid technological innovation.

H.R. 3935 includes needed direction to the FAA as our industry goes through an era of development of innovation and technology that rivals the dawn of the jet-age. For this reason, it is critical that FAA be given and simultaneously set direction and embrace technological development.

H.R. 3935 also provides direction by encouraging certification improvements through the utilization of digital tools and software. Given these methods are increasingly used in design and to document certification activity, FAA evaluating and implementing their use on a more consistent basis could evolve the current paper-driven and transactional process to a more real-time review. This would better leverage technology and have aviation safety benefits as well as facilitating efficiencies and coordination amongst applicants and the FAA.

GAMA also supports the committee's critical direction for Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) vehicles. This includes mandating a rulemaking to enable initial powered-lift operations by 2025 and a permanent regulatory framework for commercial operations and the integration and entry into the national airspace system for these vehicles within five years. Additionally, H.R. 3935

provides direction on infrastructure, including electrification, to support electric propulsion and vertical flight including the development of vertiports.

We would also like to praise the inclusion, during floor debate, of an amendment offered by Reps. Salud Carbajal, Rudy Yakym, and Sharice Davids, to create a pilot program to deliver clearances via mobile devices (e.g., tablets) through Internet Protocol. We appreciate the collaboration and support of the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA) on this amendment. FAA-funded trials have shown that the functionality can be enabled safely and securely and deliver fuel savings and operational efficiencies.

H.R. 3935 also underscores important workforce efforts for both FAA and industry. For example, the measure extends and strengthens critical aviation workforce development programs (Sec. 625) initially authorized in 2018 that focuses on pilots and maintenance workers while also expanding the program to add a focus on manufacturing which GAMA strongly supports. The addition of a manufacturing element to the existing program would complement the goal of improving continued operational safety for design, production, operation, and maintenance, and help build a future, more diverse workforce for the breadth of the aviation sector.

From an FAA workforce perspective, the legislation directs an FAA workforce assessment including staffing levels, competency, and skills for critical safety positions in the Flight Standards Service and Aircraft Certification Service and the promotion of expanded training opportunities to enhance FAA's technical capabilities. In addition, H.R. 3935 encourages an FAA telework policy that is based on job functions, duties, and level of management.

H.R. 3935 also highlights the ongoing Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions (EAGLE)<sup>5</sup> initiative and encourages its work in the development and implementation of a safe transition to unleaded fuel for the piston-engine aircraft fleet by no later than 2030. This direction is increasingly important given the recent Environmental Protection Agency finding about lead-emissions from piston-powered aircraft fuel, also known as avgas.

GAMA has great hope that FAA Administrator Whitaker, Deputy Administrator Thomson, and the rest of the agency can make great progress in addressing these challenges. However, it is imperative that Congress use all efforts to enact, in a bipartisan and bicameral fashion, a bill to reauthorize the FAA and fully join them in these critical efforts. Again, we appreciate and applaud the action that this committee, and this body, have produced with the passage of the Securing Growth and Robust Leadership in American Aviation Act. Thank you for the opportunity to express the importance of this effort, and for your collective work to date. We look forward to working with you, and your colleagues, to provide leadership, direction, and stability to the FAA.

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<sup>5</sup> [Eliminate Aviation Gasoline Lead Emissions \(EAGLE\) Initiative](#)