

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 3, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy:

We are deeply concerned about recent actions taken by the Administration to indiscriminately reduce the size of the federal workforce and the effect of those actions on the federal employees who are critical to ensuring the safety of the national airspace system (NAS). We are particularly alarmed with the timing of these actions and the agency-wide purge of probationary employees, given the recent spate of aviation accidents and the mounting pressures on the NAS.¹ The traveling public deserves a steady and fully staffed Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and the agency's workforce must be allowed to focus on its important mission instead of responding to unproductive and vague inquiries that only serve as unnecessary distractions. We urge you to reverse these actions and immediately put an end to any further unnecessary terminations.

The FAA's primary mission is to facilitate the safe operation of the NAS, which heavily relies on the expertise and commitment of the FAA's workforce. Unfortunately, many of the Administration's personnel actions have created uncertainty and unnecessary stress among the FAA's employees. Whether it's the executive order implementing a federal hiring freeze on the President's first day in office, the government-wide "fork in the road" emails pressuring federal employees to opt into a "deferred resignation program,"² or the five-bullet Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) ultimatums sent February 22 and February 28,³ this Administration's actions are incompatible with the need to maintain a skilled and dedicated workforce. Furthermore, the Administration's attempts to clarify the various legal and logistical concerns of its recent actions have only led to more uncertainty and questions.

Despite claims made earlier this month that positions related to public safety would be exempt from personnel actions, aviation-safety related professionals at the FAA and elsewhere continue to be targeted by this Administration. For instance, on February 17, 2025 the Administration fired approximately 400 "probationary" FAA employees, many of whom were in roles essential

¹ Tara Copp, *Trump begins firings of FAA staff just weeks after fatal DC plane crash*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, (Feb. 17, 2025), available at: <https://apnews.com/article/doge-faa-air-traffic-firings-safety-67981aec33b6ee72cbad8dcee31f3437>.

² Suzanne Rowan Kelleher, *Air Traffic Controllers First Learned They Were Exempt From Trump's Buyout From CNN*, FORBES, (Feb. 3, 2025), available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/suzannerowankelleher/2025/02/03/air-traffic-controllers-exempt-trump-buyout/>.

³ Rebecca Beitsch, *OPM tells HR leaders that response to Musk is 'voluntary'* THE HILL (Feb. 24, 2025), available at: <https://thehill.com/policy/national-security/5161737-opm-defends-musk-email/>; Katherine Tangalakis-Lippert, Juliana Kaplan, and Ayelet Sheffey, *DOGE now wants government workers to email their accomplishments on a weekly basis*, BUSINESS INSIDER, (Feb. 28, 2025), available at: <https://www.businessinsider.com/doge-second-productivity-email-federal-workers-more-soon-2025-2>.

to aviation safety.⁴ It is our understanding that these terminations have impacted employees in the FAA's Aviation Safety Division, Aircraft Certification Office, Flight Standards Office, Office of Airports, Air Traffic Organization, and the Office of Rulemaking—among others. These skilled employees and the offices they support are vital to the operation of the NAS and ensuring the safety of the traveling public.⁵

Our Committees are willing to work with you to find ways to strengthen our air traffic control system and bolster safety for the flying public. However, mass terminations and other short-sighted actions negatively impacting the FAA's workforce only serves to suppress much needed expertise and reduce the talent pool needed to meet the evolving needs of the NAS. This harms not only the agency, but puts the nearly 3 million airline passengers it serves each day at risk.⁶

In order to gain clarity regarding the Administration's latest actions, we request a briefing and written responses to the following questions and requests for information as soon as possible, but no later than Monday, March 17, 2025:

1. Provide the memoranda, guidance or other related policy documentation pertaining to the mass-firing of FAA employees that occurred on or around February 14, 2025.
2. What definition is the Administration using to determine which FAA positions are "safety critical"? How and when was this definition communicated to the FAA?
3. Provide the number of FAA employees and the job descriptions of the employees that have been terminated or placed on administrative leave since January 20, 2025.
4. How many of the terminated FAA employees previously accepted the Administration's recent "fork in the road" buyout offer? Are they still afforded the full terms of the offer, including alleged full pay and benefits and exemption from return-to-work programs until September 30, 2025? Have any of these employees been called back to work given the recent NAS incidents?
5. Given the mass layoffs of hundreds of FAA employees, how will the Department of Transportation (DOT) comply with the requirements of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization law to increase the hiring of, improve the staffing models for and maintain sufficient levels of aviation safety inspectors, safety technicians and operations support positions necessary to meet the growing needs of the agency and NAS?⁷
6. According to recent reports, the Administration is planning another mass termination of federal employees in the upcoming weeks.⁸ Are FAA employees exempt from this future

⁴ *Supra* at 1.

⁵ Professional Aviation Safety Specialists, *PASS on Firing of Probationary Employees at FAA*, (Feb. 15, 2025), available at: <https://www.passnational.org/index.php/news/873-pass-statement-on-firing-of-probationary-employees-at-faa>

⁶ https://www.faa.gov/air_traffic/by_the_numbers

⁷ *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*, Pub. L. No. 118-63, §428, §430, §431.

⁸ Chris Megerain, *The Trump Administration sets the stage for large-scale federal worker layoffs in a new memo*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, (Feb. 26, 2025), available at: <https://apnews.com/article/trump-elon-musk-federal-workers-layoffs-d295d4bb2cdd5023c27d9cb03754e81b>.

purge of government employees? If so, please share all memoranda, guidance and other related policy documentation related to such proposed actions.

7. What guidance did the DOT or FAA provide to employees that were unable to receive the five-bullet DOGE ultimatums (for instance, employees on medical or parental leave, etc.)?
8. What guidance did the DOT or FAA provide to employees to ensure that sensitive information—such as Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI); For Official Use Information (FOUO); Personally Identifiable Information (PII); corporate proprietary data; and other sensitive information was handled appropriately when responding to the recent five-bullet DOGE ultimatums? Does this guidance remain in effect for any subsequent ultimatums, and if so, how and when was that communicated to DOT and FAA employees?
9. Is the DOT or FAA planning any punitive actions for any employees who did not respond to the five-bullet DOGE ultimatum? How will the DOT and FAA categorize employees who do not respond to the weekly five-bullet DOGE ultimatums?
10. Detail your planned course of action to mitigate the impact of the firings, and any future mass firings, on the NAS and aviation safety.

Congressional intent of the overwhelmingly bipartisan 2024 FAA Reauthorization law is clear—bolster the ranks of the workforce across the FAA. The Administration’s mass terminations orders of FAA employees in aviation safety positions clearly conflicts with and undermines the intent of this law. Furthermore, the confusion and chaos caused by the Administration’s personnel actions risks jeopardizing the stability and safety of our complex aviation ecosystem. We urge you to work with the President to prevent any further damage to an already strained workforce. We look forward to your expeditious responses to the above inquiries.

Sincerely,



Rick Larsen
Ranking Member
Committee on Transportation
and Infrastructure



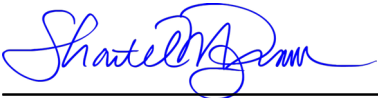
Gerald E. Connolly
Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and
Government Reform



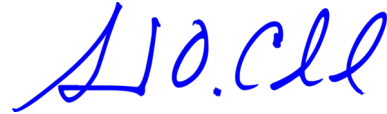
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress
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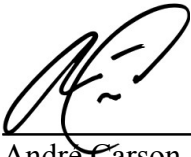
Julia Brownley
Member of Congress



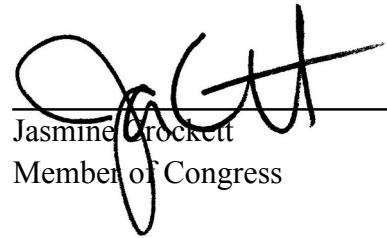
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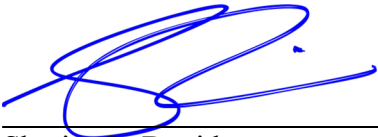
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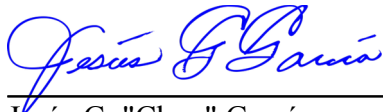
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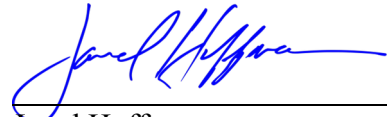
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Robert Garcia
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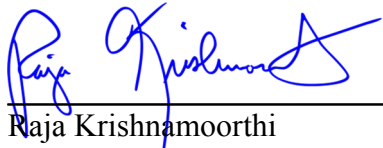
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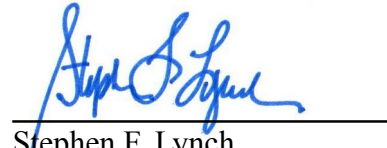
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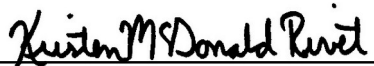
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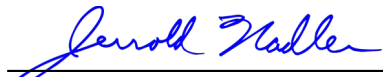
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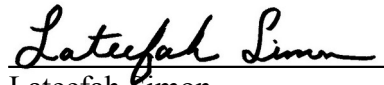
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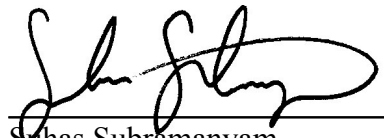
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Emilia Strong Sykes
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Dina Titus
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Rashida Tlaib
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Frederica S. Wilson

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Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Chris Rocheleau, Acting Administrator, Federal Aviation Administration