

## Letter to Shuster, DeFazio Highlights Importance of Regional Airline Safety in FAA Reauthorization

Buffalo, New York - February 13th, 2015 - In conjunction with Thursday's sixth anniversary of the tragic crash of Continental Flight 3407, operated by regional carrier Colgan Air, a bipartisan House contingent led by Western New York Representatives Chris Collins and Brian Higgins showed their support for the group's regional airline safety efforts with a letter to House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure Chairman Rep. Bill Shuster and Ranking Member Rep. Peter DeFazio. The letter targets the committee's efforts in the upcoming months to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration, and calls on the committee to continue its support for the implementation of P.L. 111-216, the Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010, the landmark aviation safety legislation which was unanimously passed by both Houses in the aftermath of the crash.

"Once again, we are eternally grateful to Congressmen Collins and Higgins, along with Congresswoman Slaughter and Congressman Reed, as they continue to lead the charge for 'One Level of Safety' on behalf of the Western New York Community that was devastated by this very preventable tragedy," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four year old daughter Elly when Flight 3407 crashed less than a mile from their family's home. "While six years may have passed, it is very important that the airlines and their lobbyists, as well as any members who may be entertaining thoughts of introducing provisions that would weaken this law on behalf of the industry, recognize that we are as committed and determined as ever, and we look forward to being visible and active participants as this legislation is drafted in the upcoming weeks and months."

The letter, which prioritizes the full-scale implementation of a new federal electronic pilot training records database as well as which speaks out against any weakening of new regional airline first officer qualification requirements, drew its support from members in the New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio region. Reps. Peter King, Chris Gibson, Elise Stefanik, Eliot Engel, Jerrold Nadler, Paul Tonko, and Steve Israel of the New York delegation, Leonard Lance, Chris Smith, Bill Pascrell, and Albio Sires of the New Jersey delegation, Glenn Thompson and Michael Fitzpatrick of the Pennsylvania delegation, and Mike Turner, Steve Stivers, and Bill Johnson of the Ohio delegation all signed on. Additionally, Rep. Dan Lipinsky of Illinois, an Aviation Subcommittee member, joined on the letter.

"We cannot say 'Thank You' enough to these members for standing alongside of us in the memory of our loved ones," declared Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a prominent 9/11 widow and activist. "Obviously the support reflects the region of the country which was most affected by this needless tragedy, but it is so important that Congress realizes that an incident like this could devastate a community anywhere in the United States, from Nebraska to Wyoming to Colorado. Unfortunately, just as in the case of Flight 3407, all it takes is one regional carrier pushing the limits in how it chooses to conduct its day-to-day operations. While there has been significant turnover in Congress during the six years subsequent to the crash, we look forward to conducting outreach and raising awareness of this critical issue on both sides of the Hill in the upcoming weeks and months."

The text of the letter is included below, and copies of the letter itself, complete with the member's signatures, are available upon request.

February 12, 2015

The Honorable Bill Shuster

Chairman, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

2165 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter DeFazio

Ranking Member, Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

2163 Rayburn House Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Shuster and Ranking Member DeFazio:

As your Committee considers reauthorization of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), we urge you to continue to support the implementation of the Airline Safety and Federal Aviation Administration Extension Act of 2010 (PL.111-216) and resist pressure to undermine the enacted provisions.

The tragic crash of Colgan Air Flight 3407 six years ago in Clarence Center, N.Y. spurred Congress to pass the largest overhaul to aviation safety in over forty years. This law encompassed the priorities that had been identified for years by the National Transportation Safety Board but had long been ignored. From pilot fatigue guidelines to new training methods for pilots, this law has helped achieve One Level of Safety among all airlines and gone a long way in preventing future accidents like that of Flight 3407.

Since passage of this legislation, the FAA has successfully implemented many of its provisions – with the most recent being a final rule requiring safety management systems for all Part 121

carriers. While these rules have been marked by the slow pace of rulemaking, they have been successful in encompassing the views of all stakeholders. One of the final remaining measures on the docket for implementation of this 2010 law is the creation of a Pilot Records Database. This database – which could have revealed Flight 3407 captain’s history of failed test flights – is critical in ensuring that airlines have full access to a pilot’s comprehensive record, including licenses, aircraft ratings, check rides, Notices of Disapproval and other proficiency tests for hiring purposes.

As the FAA continues to fulfill the mission set forth by Congress in 2010, we ask that the Committee – during consideration of an upcoming FAA Reauthorization – remain committed to upholding the spirit and letter of this aviation safety law.

Of particular concern are attempts to erode the pilot qualification standards – which mandate that a first officer hold an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) certificate, typically attained through 1,500 hours of flight time. Claims that changes to this rule are necessary to ameliorate a supposed pilot shortage ignore the meager salaries that first officers earn at regional airlines – the true reason these airlines have difficulty attracting qualified applicants. In addition, we ask that the timeline for the Pilots Records Database be accelerated and subject to clear implementation milestones.

We thank you for your continued cooperation and efforts to ensure safe travel aboard commercial airlines – and we look forward to working with you as the Committee considers the latest FAA Reauthorization.

Sincerely,