

In Light of Germanwings Tragedy, Group Calls for Expedited Efforts on Pilot Record Database, Screening

Buffalo, New York - April 13th, 2015 - In conjunction with Tuesday morning's full committee hearing of the Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation featuring FAA Administrator Michael Huerta and the topic of the upcoming FAA Reauthorization, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' issued a call for committee leadership and members to probe the agency's slow pace of implementation of the crucial pilot record database, as well to examine the overall process of screening pilots here in the United States. The group also applauded the committee leadership for positioning regional airline safety as a key component of the upcoming hearings that will instruct the committee's efforts to draft an FAA Reauthorization Bill.

"First and foremost, our thoughts and prayers go out to the families and friends of those lost in the Germanwings tragedy" declared Scott Maurer of Brandon, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "They are experiencing a pain that is beyond words, and one that sadly we know all too well. With that being said, this should serve as a clarion call for the FAA to do all that it can to ensure that we have the most comprehensive pilot screening process in the world. A key component of this would be putting the electronic pilot records database into operation. In today's modern day and age, it is unacceptable that we are going on nearly five years and there is no end in sight for this project to be completed. No other family should ever have to go through the pain of hearing an airline CEO testify before Congress that a pilot would not have been hired had the airline had access to his complete training record. We call on Senators Thune, Nelson, Ayotte, and Cantwell to shine a bright light on this glaring shortcoming with Administrator Huerta."

Since FAA and DOT released a projected timeline for the pilot record database back in May 2013, the target date for a Notice of Proposed Rule Making to be published has slid from January 2015, to April 2015, to October 2015, and now most recently in a February 2015 tracking report, all the way to April 2016. After issuing the proposal, a public comment period and further revision to the proposal by FAA and DOT would also be required, and then the industry would be allowed an implementation period before the database would be fully operational. All together, it likely would take over ten years after the crash of Flight 3407 for the common-sense reform to go into effect.

"We appreciate Senator Thune's leadership in calling this hearing and in keeping safety at the forefront of the FAA Reauthorization discussion," stated Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister Beverly Eckert, a prominent 9/11 widow and activist. "Complacency is the number one enemy that must be overcome in keeping our commercial aviation system as safe as possible, and we must continue to send a strong message to the industry that nothing but adherence to the strongest standards of commitment to and investment in safety is acceptable. In an industry model where there are significant economic pressures on regional airlines to operate at the lowest cost possible, we must remain vigilant that this does not lead to any shortcuts or anything less than a true 'One Level of Safety' comparable to what is provided by the mainline carriers. And when it comes to this reauthorization process, there can be no caving in by Congress to the demands of the powerful airline lobby as they relate to safety rollbacks."

Tuesday's hearing, entitled 'Federal Aviation Administration Reauthorization', will be held at 10:00 a.m. in Room 253 Russell Senate Office Building.