

Relief from Higher Pilot Qualification Standards Would Benefit Bottom-Feeder Regional Airlines

Buffalo, New York - March 16th, 2016 - Just over one month removed from the 7th anniversary of the fatal crash that took the lives of their loved ones, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' announced that group members would be in attendance at Wednesday's mark-up of the FAA Reauthorization Bill by the Senate's Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The group remains on high alert for any potential legislative action that would explicitly or implicitly seek to water down stronger entry-level pilot qualification requirements for regional airline first officers that were unanimously passed by Congress back in 2010 in the wake of the tragic and preventable crash.

"In the last seven years, when it comes to Washington, we have learned the hard way that you have to be on constant alert for the proverbial wolf-in-sheep's-clothing," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "Clearly the members of this committee are feeling a lot of pressure from lobbyists, and hopefully they can resist the urge to give in, and instead hold the line when it comes to safety. The sad thing is that the regional airlines who have the most at stake here are the bottom feeders who have a history of taking shortcuts, of petitioning the FAA for exemptions from these stronger requirements, and most alarmingly, of even being shut down by the FAA for not adhering to bare minimum federal safety requirements. All this while some of them are annually accepting millions of dollars in government subsidies. It is our fervent hope that under the leadership of Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson, that this FAA Bill continues to challenge these airlines to step up and meet the highest safety standards possible, rather than lowering the bar to accommodate their desire to race to the bottom."

In advance of Wednesday's mark-up, which will be held at 10:00 am in Room 253 Russell Senate Office Building, the group highlighted the fact that the anniversary of the crash on February 12th marked seven years with no fatal commercial airline crashes on U.S. carriers, the longest such period in U.S. aviation history. And despite seven years having passed, the group also challenged the committee's leadership to maintain the same urgency that, in the aftermath of the crash, spurred a strongly divided Congress to unanimously approve landmark safety legislation. This legislation, aimed at raising the commitment to safety among the nation's regional carriers, recognized the glaring safety gap that had developed between the nation's mainline and regional carriers, as the previous six fatal commercial crashes had all occurred on regional carriers between 2001 and 2009.

"Obviously as time marches on, and with each successive safe takeoff and landing, it is easy for

the airlines, members of Congress, their staffers, and other stakeholders to forget the absolute outrage that everyone, including Senators Rockefeller and Hutchison, felt back in 2009 as the NTSB investigation exposed some of the appalling safety shortcomings of the regional airline industry," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York who lost his twenty-four year old daughter Ellyce. "While some members might try to characterize us and other similar groups as the 'safety people', and dismiss our efforts because we 'will never be happy,' they couldn't be more insensitive nor further from the truth. We aren't simply 'safety people'. Rather we are citizen advocates who have lost daughters, sons, husbands, wives, parents, and so much more, and yet continue at our own expense to fight to ensure that every member of the traveling public receives a level of safety that our loved ones sadly did not. And while they may be somewhat correct in their assertion that we will likely never be happy, they also wildly miss the mark in that regard, as our unhappiness comes from waking up every day to the painful void of loved ones who were needlessly taken from us that night in a very preventable tragedy. Hopefully these same people can at least have the decency to recognize that we are fighting for their loved ones, so that they never have to know the pain and sadness that we experience on a daily basis, and step up and do the right thing when it comes to this FAA Bill."