

Buffalo, New York - April 5, 2017 - As both houses continue to move forward with reauthorizing the Federal Aviation Administration, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' announced that group members would be present at Thursday's hearing of the Senate Commerce Committee's Aviation Operations, Safety, and Security Subcommittee. The group continues to push back against industry pressure to roll back stronger entry-level first officer qualification requirements enacted as a result of the 2009 regional airline crash outside of Buffalo, New York.

"Tomorrow looks to be a continuation of recent hearings where the regional airlines and their cronies make the case that the sky is falling because of these stronger safety requirements," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four year old daughter Ellyce as the plane crashed less than a mile away from their home. "This rings hollow for us, as we lost our loved ones due to the tragic culmination of over a decade of allowing the regional airline industry to cut corners and do the bare minimum when it came to meeting federal safety requirements. Congress thoroughly examined the industry in the wake of this needless crash and unanimously - something which doesn't happen very often these days - took steps to require regional airlines to step up their game. Rather than looking for loopholes and legislative gimmicks to return things to the way they used to be prior to the crash, we need to acknowledge that we have now gone 8 years without a fatal commercial crash, and must continue to fight to preserve these safety gains that our loved ones needlessly died for."

Thursday's hearing, entitled 'FAA Reauthorization: Perspectives on Rural Air Service and the General Aviation Community,' will be held at 10:00 a.m. in Room 253 of the Russell Senate Office Building. Along with ensuring that the regional airlines safety initiatives implemented by the FAA over the past eight years are not watered down, the group continues to push the FAA to complete the final 2 outstanding provisions of the safety bill, the creation of a comprehensive electronic pilot records database to be utilized in the screening and hiring of pilots, and new requirements for pilot professional development programs for all commercial air carriers.

"Clearly the industry is trying to use some one-sided data to portray that no one wants to be a pilot anymore and blame this on the new safety regulations," declared Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister and noted 9/11 widow and activist Beverly Eckert. "This conveniently overlooks the fact that for over a decade many regional airlines treated their pilots like fast food employees with food stamp-level wages. While they may now be paying the price for that transgression, it was our loved ones who truly paid the ultimate price, and it would be absolutely irresponsible for Congress to bail out some of the bottom feeders in this industry by rolling back these safety regulations. Instead we must continue to challenge all regional airlines to raise the safety bar to that of their mainline partners, so that every member of the flying public who boards a flight operated by a regional carrier receives a TRUE 'One Level of Safety'."