

## **Committee Ignores Impassioned Pleas of Miracle on the Hudson Crew; Amendment Barely Passes on Straight Party Line Vote**

Buffalo, New York - June 30, 2017 - The 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' reacted strongly on Thursday to the narrow passage of an amendment to the Commerce Committee's FAA Reauthorization Bill that would significantly weaken the stronger regional airline pilot experience requirements unanimously passed by Congress in 2010 and finalized by the FAA in 2013. The safety provision in question was part of a comprehensive package of safety reforms implemented by the FAA in the wake of the 2009 crash of Flight 3407 outside of Buffalo, New York, that have resulted in over eight consecutive years of zero fatalities on US commercial planes, the longest such period in U.S. aviation history by over three times.

"It was extremely disappointing for us to watch the events of this week unfold, but along with Sully, Skiles, and anyone else who puts safety first across this country, we remain as committed as ever to fighting to ensure that this dangerous language does not make its way into law," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida who lost his thirty-year-old daughter Lorin. "When we first came to Washington in 2009, our efforts were caught in the cross-fire of Senator Corker and Congressman Oberstar vigorously disagreeing on a FedEx versus UPS issue, and a host of Senators quarreling over slots at Reagan National Airport. Clearly, the fight to ensure that every passenger boarding a regional airplane receives the same commitment to, and investment in, safety as one boarding a mainline carrier is a much more life-or-death battle to fight, and if it takes another twenty-one extensions to do that, I stand ready to do so in memory of my daughter and everyone else needlessly lost of that flight."

The amendment passed on a 14-13 straight party line vote, and the family group criticized the senators voting on it for ignoring the powerful testimony of Captain Sully Sullenberger at a committee hearing back in 2015, as well as numerous meetings and phone calls conducted by Sullenberger and his first officer, Jeff Skiles, in the days leading up to the vote.

"Although this language includes seemingly innocuous words like 'disciplined' and 'structured,' and was presented as being a 'narrow' and 'modest' modification to the existing requirement, from where we sit it couldn't be any broader or more vague, which is deeply concerning to us," declared John Kausner, of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four-year-old daughter Elly when the plane crashed less than a mile from their family home. "Congress and the FAA originally modeled this pilot qualifications provision in a way that enhanced both the quantity AND the quality of the preparation a regional airline first officer receives prior to being hired for his or her first commercial airline job, something that the cockpit voice recorder clearly revealed was necessary in the case of Flight 3407. It also incentivized the gold standard pilot

training pathways offered by the military and aviation programs offered by accredited two- and four-year colleges and universities, which this measure unwisely seeks to undo. The captain of Flight 3407 was hired for his first job by regional carrier Gulfstream Airways with only 618 hours, and proceeded to struggle to pass check rides and proficiency checks throughout his entire career. Had these requirements been in place at the time, we feel strongly that it is very likely that he never would have made it into the Part 121 sector in the first place, and that our loved ones would still be here today."

The group also praised the steadfast efforts of those senators who diligently fought to defend the safety bill all week and in particular during the mark-up.

"We cannot say thank you enough to those who so vigorously defended the merits of this safety bill and the memory of our loved ones who were tragically lost in a very preventable crash," stated Karen Eckert, of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister and noted 9/11 widow and activist Beverly Eckert. "Senators Schumer and Gillibrand have been leading the charge on our behalf from Day One, and we are so appreciative of their unwavering and resolute support. To Senators Nelson, Cantwell, Klobuchar, Blumenthal and everyone else who eloquently stated their case in the name of a true One Level of Safety, our loved ones were looking down and smiling. And I know that my sister Beverly would have been particularly moved by the impassioned arguments made by Senator Duckworth, whose experience as a pilot and courage in overcoming all that she has faced is inspirational to all."