

Call on DOT and OMB to Complete Accompanying Rule Making

Buffalo, New York - December 8, 2017 - The 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' recognized a key milestone today, as the initial release of the Pilot Records Database, another major provision of the landmark 2010 'Airline Safety Act,' was unveiled by the Federal Aviation Administration. The database addresses one of the major flaws in the hiring process at some regional airlines uncovered by the National Transportation Safety Board in the aftermath of the crash, where company officials had difficulties obtaining pilots' full record for use in hiring decisions.

"Undoubtedly one of the most painful memories in the months immediately following this tragedy was when Phil Trenary, the CEO of Colgan's parent company Pinnacle, acknowledged to Senator Dorgan in a hearing that the captain of Flight 3407 would not have been hired had his prior training record been fully accessible prior to his being hired," stated Ken Mellett of McLean, Virginia, who lost his thirty-four year-old son, Coleman, a jazz guitarist in the Chuck Mangione Band. "No family should ever again lose a loved one due to that type of easily preventable mistake. This is another big step towards ensuring that the disastrous process that led to the crash of Flight 3407 and previous regional airline crashes is never allowed to repeat itself. Kudos to Brad Palmer and his entire project team at FAA, and we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the FAA leadership of Michael Huerta, Peggy Gilligan, and Ali Bahrami - collectively their efforts have helped move this critical project so much closer to becoming reality and mark another way that we can honor Coleman's memory."

This initial release of the database will greatly increase the availability and accessibility of a pilot's FAA records to aid airlines in the hiring process. However, the family group highlighted the need for the completion of an ongoing rule making process to ensure that training data from previous employers as well as pilots' state driving records will be included in the database, which was also mandated by the Safety Act. In the meantime, airlines will still have to obtain those records separately. According to the Department of Transportation website, the proposal is currently under review at the Office of the Secretary of Transportation (OST), and would next head to the Office of Management and Budget prior to being released to the public - the current target for release is late February 2018.

"The Pilot Records Database is another key element of the multi-faceted approach devised by Congress to achieve a true 'One Level of Safety' between our nation's regional and mainline carriers, after the NTSB investigation into Flight 3407 uncovered serious safety shortcomings at the regional airline level," declared Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year-old daughter Lorin. "When combined with the provisions already in place that address the areas of pilot fatigue, stall training, first officer qualifications, and safety management systems,

Congress, FAA, and DOT have taken significant steps to address these deficiencies. The results speak for themselves - nearly nine years without a fatal crash by a U.S. commercial carrier, the longest such period in our history by over three times. And anyone who would suggest that we can afford to roll back or water down any individual components of this comprehensive safety legislation would be sending the absolutely wrong message to the regional airlines, namely that it is acceptable to return to their old ways, which sadly robbed us of so many wonderful people, including my daughter Lorin."

The group also recognized the extensive bipartisan support for the database, and the 2010 committee leadership in both Houses that worked together to make this historic piece of aviation safety legislation a reality.

"The beauty of this database is that it truly was a bipartisan effort, which safety always should be, and a reminder of the collective senses of both dismay and urgency felt by Congress as a result of Flight 3407 investigation, which led to the remarkable feat of this legislation unanimously passing both houses of Congress," stated Karen Eckert of Williamsville, New York, who lost her sister and noted 9/11 activist Beverly Eckert in the crash. "One of the many lessons we learned from Beverly's Post-9/11 advocacy here in Washington is that you must always recognize those who fight for you, and in this case, the committee leadership of Congressmen Oberstar, Mica, Costello, and Petri, and Senators Rockefeller, Hutchison, Dorgan, and DeMint was absolutely instrumental in making these safety reforms a reality. Obviously we have had great support from the Western New York delegation from Day One, and there are so many others on both sides of the Hill and both sides of the aisle who have fought the good fight right alongside us - to all of you, we say thank you, and please know that Beverly and all of our loved ones are smiling down on you. But the job is not done - we are counting on Secretary Chao at DOT and Director Mulvaney at OMB to see this rule making process through to completion as expediently as possible, so that all pertinent records are included in this database and that it truly becomes the comprehensive, 'one-stop shop' that it was intended to be."