

## **Group Opposes Lobbying Efforts to Water Down Pilot Qualification Requirements**

Buffalo, New York - July 18, 2018 - With the current FAA authorization set to expire at the end of September and indications that the Senate will be taking up this issue shortly, the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' called on Senators John Thune (R-SD) and Bill Nelson (D-FL), the chairman and ranking member of the Commerce Committee, to resist pressure from the regional airlines and their lobbyists to weaken entry-level pilot qualification standards.

"The propaganda from the regional airlines and their lobbyists is reaching an all-time high, and we have to remain as vigilant and vocal as ever," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York who lost his twenty-four year old daughter Ellyce when the plane crashed less than a mile from his family home. "While there has been plenty of turnover in the Senate since the crash, Senators Thune and Nelson have been present in Room 253 Russell for numerous aviation safety hearings right back to when Senator Dorgan held the first one in May 2009. We even remember Senator Thune pressing then-Administrator Babbitt over his concerns that his constituents in smaller communities like Pierre would be stuck with less experienced pilots as compared to passengers flying out of larger airports like Chicago and Minneapolis. We continue our fight to ensure that there is a true 'One Level of Safety' for all Americans who board a plane, regardless of the size of the airport or whether the flight is operated by a mainline or regional carrier. As the Senate presses forward with its FAA Bill, we are counting on Senators Thune and Nelson to put the safety of the American flying public ahead of the wishes and pocketbooks of the regional airline CEO's and their lobbyists."

The family group also underlined the regional airline industry's historic safety record in the aftermath of crash - now over nine years without a fatal crash - in large part due to the landmark aviation safety law that was passed by Congress in its aftermath.

"The regional airline safety legislation that was unanimously passed by Congress back in 2010 has absolutely worked as intended in challenging the regional airlines to raise their safety standards to that of the major carriers," stated Scott Maurer of Palmetto, Florida, who lost his thirty year old daughter Lorin. "Complacency is the daily enemy of safety, and the combined focus of Congress, the NTSB, FAA, DOT, and safety advocates like us has kept the regionals on edge and pointed in the right direction. Any congressional or administration action to lower the entry-level experience requirements for regional airline first officers would send the wrong message to the industry, and encourage a return to the short-cutting ways that led to the needless tragedy of Flight 3407 and a slew of regional airline crashes in the decade prior. Regional airlines have been touting their improved pay structures and working conditions for

pilots in recent years; it is just sad that it took them so long to figure that out. Instead, Flight 3407 took off with a first officer making \$16,000 a year, who had ridden in the jump seat of a FedEx from Seattle to Newark in the middle of the night to report for duty, which ultimately led to her being thoroughly exhausted when Lorin and all the passengers needed her to be on the top of her game. Shame on us if we take any actions that undercut the much-needed progress that has been made, and the most painful lessons that were learned on that February night outside of Buffalo."