

Transportation Secretary Offers Key Assurances on Pilot Qualifications, Database

Buffalo, New York - April 18, 2019 - After meeting with Secretary of Transportation Elaine Chao on Wednesday, members of the 'Families of Continental Flight 3407' were encouraged by her statements addressing two key provisions of the 2010 aviation safety law that was unanimously passed by Congress in response to the 2009 regional airline crash.

"First and foremost, we thank Secretary Chao for taking the time to sit down with us and remember our loved ones whose lives were tragically and needlessly cut short," stated Susan Bourque of East Aurora, New York, who lost her sister and prominent 9/11 activist Beverly Eckert. "Just as importantly, she gave us her word that safety comes first at DOT and FAA, and that nothing would be done under her watch to alter the enhanced pilot qualification requirements put in place in 2014. We look forward to working with her and her team to ensure that the forward progress that has been made in achieving a true 'One Level of Safety' between our nation's regional airlines and their mainline partners is continued."

Besides resisting repeated maneuvering by the nation's regional airlines and their lobbyists to water down the new first officer qualifications (FOQ) rule, the family group also prioritized the full implementation of the pilot records database (PRD), which has experienced numerous delays on both the technical and rule making sides over the past two years. The Database provision was included in the law after Colgan Air hired the captain of Flight 3407 without knowledge of his complete training record, which had included multiple failures and deficiencies.

"We appreciate Secretary Chao putting us at ease in terms of the first officer qualifications rule, and now we can turn our full attention to pushing the Pilot Database over the goal line," stated John Kausner of Clarence Center, New York, who lost his twenty-four-year-old daughter Ellyce when Flight 3407 crashed less than a mile from their family home. "When it comes to bringing together the entire alphabet soup team of FAA, OST, OMB and OIRA to lead this critical project to completion, no one is more qualified than her with her years of experience in Washington. Unfortunately it is too late for Elly and all of our loved ones, but the American flying public is counting on Secretary Chao to put her words from yesterday into action. There is no reason ten years after this crash that every airline should not have 'one-stop shop' access to a pilot's complete record in the hiring process."