



May 16, 2025

The Honorable Tim Walberg  
 Chairman  
 U.S. House Committee on Education and the Workforce  
 2176 Rayburn House Office Building  
 Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Walberg,

As organizations representing a broad range of aviation stakeholders, we write to express our strong support for several flight education-related provisions in the reconciliation package, *Student Success and Taxpayer Savings Plan*. This language would greatly assist students receiving an education to become a commercial airline pilot. By allowing students in certified, high-quality undergraduate programs that provide flight training to access loan amounts for professional students, this bill will make it possible for more people, especially those not well represented in the industry, to pursue the pilot profession. This legislation will also help ensure that the commercial aviation industry can meet the robust long-term demand for air service across the country. We greatly appreciate that the proposal recognizes the unique nature of these undergraduate programs and the importance of building the pilot pipeline for a thriving U.S. economy.

Despite our collective efforts to grow the pipeline, the high cost of flight education and training remains the chief barrier to convincing individuals to pursue the pilot career path. According to the University Aviation Association, collegiate flight training typically adds on average \$80,000 in additional expenses to a two and four-year degree. With the average cost of tuition and fees at a public, in-state institution for a bachelor's degree at approximately \$44,000,<sup>1</sup> this translates to

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<sup>1</sup> See: <https://www.usnews.com/education/best-colleges/paying-for-college/articles/paying-for-college-infographic>

at least \$120,000 for a professional pilot degree. Most students and their families do not have the means or strong enough credit to borrow expensive private loans. By increasing the amount of student loan aid available to students in part 141 programs, the *Student Success and Taxpayer Savings Plan* helps to make the pilot profession more accessible.

There has never been a better and more critical time to become a pilot. Demand for pilots is expected to be robust for years to come. While the career path is expensive, the return on investment is high. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the median salary for pilots working in scheduled air transportation was \$239,200 or more per year as of 2024.<sup>2</sup> Flight education students are very likely to get a high-paying job that will put them on a path to upward mobility and will be able to repay these student loans. That is why it makes sense to treat these programs as they are – professional licensure programs.

A robust aviation industry requires a steady supply of high-quality pilots – This legislation puts forward a commonsense solution to make the pilot career track more accessible. We thank you for your leadership on this issue and for recognizing the unique and important nature of flight education programs.

Sincerely,

Airlines for America  
American Association of Airport Executives  
Association of Value Airlines  
Cargo Airline Association  
Global Business Travel Association  
International Air Transport Association  
National Air Carrier Association  
National Association of State Aviation Officials  
National Business Aviation Association  
National Flight Training Alliance  
Regional Air Cargo Carriers Association  
Regional Airline Association  
Southwest Airlines Pilot Association  
U.S. Travel Association

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/transportation-and-material-moving/airline-and-commercial-pilots.htm#tab-5>