



June 26, 2019

The Honorable Elaine Chao
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Ave., SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Chao:

On behalf of hundreds of thousands of workers who are responsible for and depend on the safety of our aviation system, we urge you to take immediate steps to implement three directives from Congress to ensure the safety and proper oversight of foreign repair stations working on U.S. aircraft. Congressionally directed action regarding drug and alcohol testing, security screening for safety-sensitive personnel, and risk-based oversight at foreign aircraft repair stations are now years overdue—a reality that has led to a two-tiered safety system with glaring regulatory loopholes. Given renewed public recognition that the aviation industry demands strong federal oversight, DOT must ensure foreign repair stations follow the same safety and security rules that we require of maintenance work done in this country. Today, that is simply not happening.

Throughout the U.S. transportation sector there has been increased focus on drug and alcohol testing standards for those who perform safety-sensitive duties. Aircraft mechanics at U.S. carriers and domestic repair stations are no different, and these workers currently undergo extensive, federally mandated drug and alcohol testing as a term of employment. Unfortunately, foreign repair station workers are exempt from any such testing.

To address this core safety concern, the 2012 FAA Reauthorization Act directed the FAA to issue a proposed rule requiring all repair station employees responsible for safety-sensitive maintenance on U.S. aircraft to be subject to an alcohol and controlled substance testing program no later than February 14, 2013. The Obama Administration issued an advance notice of proposed rulemaking (ANPRM) on drug and alcohol testing in 2014, but no further action has been taken. Subsequently, the 2016 FAA Extension Act included another requirement for the FAA to issue a proposed drug and alcohol testing rule within 90 days of enactment, and a final rule within one year. Now, nearly three years later, we

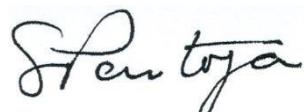
are still waiting for the FAA to comply with this Congressional mandate. If we believe drug and alcohol testing is a true cornerstone of aviation safety, then it is regulatory malpractice not to extend this requirement to foreign stations working on aircraft used by U.S. carriers.

In the same 2016 FAA Extension Act, Congress included two additional provisions aimed at increasing U.S. oversight of foreign repair stations. The first required the FAA to implement increased, risk-based safety oversight of foreign repair stations that have a demonstrated track record of performing poor work. In order to help determine which stations need increased oversight, the bill required airlines to share with the FAA data on the frequency and seriousness of corrective measures that need to be undertaken after work performed at foreign repair stations. As it is collected, this data would inform the FAA on which specific stations are routinely providing substandard, potentially dangerous work.

Finally, the 2016 bill required the FAA to ensure, within six months of enactment, that each foreign repair station worker who performs safety-sensitive work has undergone a pre-employment background investigation sufficient to determine that the individual is not a threat to aviation safety. This common sense requirement for background checks—which all U.S.-based mechanics and technicians are subject to—is essential for guaranteeing the safety of our aircraft and the travelling public. The 2014 ANPRM on drug and alcohol testing is the only administrative action that has been taken on any of these mandates, and the legitimate safety concerns that led to these legislative measures continue to go unaddressed.

The reforms mandated by Congress and their initial deadlines predate your time as Secretary of Transportation, but the responsibility to fulfill these obligations now falls to you. As part of your commitment to safe commercial aircraft operations, you have the opportunity and obligation to ensure the aircraft maintenance and repair work both at home and abroad meets the highest safety standards. The current two-tiered system runs counter to the standards the flying public expects and that Congress has mandated. It is now past time for DOT to issue these rules and prioritize the safety of our aviation system.

Sincerely,



Sito Pantoja
General Vice President
International Association of Machinists
And Aerospace Workers



John Samuelsen
International President
Transport Workers Union of America



Mike Perrone
National President
Professional Aviation Safety Specialists



Larry I. Willis
President
Transportation Trades Department, AFL-CIO