

March 21, 2023

The Honorable Maria Cantwell  
Chair  
Committee on Commerce, Science and  
Transportation  
Russell Senate Office Building 254  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Ted Cruz  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Commerce, Science and  
Transportation  
Dirksen Senate Office Building 512  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz,

We the undersigned organizations, representing aviation industry workers, pilots, airport officials, and aviation enthusiasts, write to express our opposition to the nomination of Phil Washington to be Administrator of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). Mr. Washington simply is not the right person to lead the FAA at this critical juncture. In recent months, the flying public's confidence in the aviation sector has been shaken by several alarming near-misses and FAA failures. Furthermore, the FAA must have a leader who has the experience needed to help with a looming FAA reauthorization. This is not the right time to confirm as FAA Administrator someone who lacks deep aviation experience, particularly in aviation safety, and will require on-the-job training.

Being FAA Administrator requires a substantial understanding and appreciation for the policies affecting not just large airlines or aircraft manufacturers, but also the issues facing numerous other aviation stakeholders, including business aviation companies, rural airports, general aviation pilots, and aircraft parts manufacturers just to name a few. FAA employees have technical knowledge and expertise; so should their leader.

That has generally been the position of Congress, too, which is why federal law requires the FAA Administrator to "have experience in a field directly related to aviation." (49 U.S.C. § 106(c)(3)). The FAA Administrator is not supposed to be a political appointment. Rather, it is supposed to be someone with strong aviation expertise. Mr. Washington, however, is not a pilot, is not an air traffic controller, has never worked for an airline, has never worked for an aircraft manufacturer or company in the aerospace supply chain, and has never previously worked at the FAA. At his recent confirmation hearing, Mr. Washington was unable to answer relatively basic aviation questions, including about safety and airports.

The FAA has often been called the gold standard for international aviation safety. As aviation stakeholders, we value the FAA's reputation and root for its success. That is why it gives us no pleasure to oppose Mr. Washington's nomination. Should the Senate reject his nomination, we hope the President will swiftly name a qualified replacement candidate so the FAA can move forward addressing the numerous challenges facing the aviation sector.

We stand ready and willing to work with you to make our current system strong and the envy of the world. We thank you for consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

Arizona Pilots Association

Montana Pilots Association

New Mexico Pilots Association

Minnesota Pilots Association

Michigan Business Aviation Association

New Hampshire Pilots Association

Alaska Airmen's Association

Iowa Aviation Association

Idaho Aviation Association

Nebraska Aviation Trades Association

Arkansas General Aviation Association

Kentucky Pilots Association

Florida Aero Club

Fairbanks General Aviation Association (Alaska)

Brandywine Regional Airport (Pennsylvania)

Philippi/Barbour County Regional Airport Authority (West Virginia)

Million Air

Ken Moen, former Air Traffic Controller (27 years), Reno-Tahoe International Airport (Nevada)

Harry Hammond, Member Services Director, Greater Flint Pilots Association (Michigan)

J.T. Grainger, General Aviation Pilot (Wyoming)