

The Honorable Michael E. Graham
Board Member, National Transportation Safety Board
Testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Wednesday, September 17, 2025

Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to appear before you as I seek confirmation for another term as a Board Member of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB). I am deeply honored by President Trump's nomination, and I am grateful for the support and partnership this Committee has provided both to me and to the NTSB throughout my service.

I would like to begin by recognizing the people whose love and support have made it possible for me to be here today. My wife of more than 36 years, Lori, is here with me. Watching online are our sons, Matthew, and Zachary, along with their spouses, Karinne and Crystal, and our grandson, Everett. I am also joined by my incredible staff, Anne Kerins and Brian Arata. I am truly blessed with the best family and support system anyone could hope for.

Having served my country as a Naval aviator for nearly a decade and, more recently, as a Member of the Board for the past five years, I know there is no greater privilege than public service. At the NTSB, that privilege also carries the profound responsibility of protecting the traveling public across every mode of transportation.

I appear today on my own behalf as a nominee, and not as a spokesperson for the full Board. The NTSB's time-tested, data-driven processes have earned global respect, and for that reason I may be limited in what I can say regarding active investigations.

Although I spent more than three decades in aviation before joining the Board, I have found that many of the same safety principles that guided me as an aviator apply across every mode of transportation. During my time at the NTSB, I have developed a simple mantra: *respect the unexpected*. I believe this should be a guiding principle for any organization, but especially for those entrusted with transportation safety.

We cannot predict every outcome in transportation. Flight crews do not expect a door plug to separate mid-flight. Rail workers do not expect a train to approach at high speed while they are working on the track. Communities do not expect hazardous materials from a train derailment to be released into the air. And, tragically, no one expects a helicopter to be at the same altitude as a commercial jet on final approach into one of the busiest airports in the country.

Respecting the unexpected means putting systems in place that anticipate a wide range of scenarios and prevent tragedies before they occur. When done right, these systems empower people at every level of an organization to speak up, report hazards without fear of retaliation, and even stop operations until risks are addressed.

Our goal is always zero accidents and zero fatalities. But the reality is that safety depends on recognizing risk and managing it responsibly. If confirmed, I will continue to be guided by that principle as I work with industry, government, and communities to evaluate new technologies, advance best practices, and strengthen our nation's safety record across every mode of transportation.

I am proud of the NTSB's work and reputation, and, if confirmed, I look forward to helping build upon both.

Thank you again, Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to appear before you. I welcome your questions and hope to earn your continued trust and support in serving the American people at the NTSB.