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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON COMMERCE, SCIENCE,
AND TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6125

WEBSITE: <http://commerce.senate.gov>

JOHN KEAST, STAFF DIRECTOR
KIM LIPSKY, DEMOCRATIC STAFF DIRECTOR

April 2, 2019

Mr. Daniel Elwell
Acting Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, Southwest
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Mr. Elwell,

The Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation has received information from multiple whistleblowers alleging insufficient training and improper certification of Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Aviation Safety Inspectors (ASI). As chairman of the committee, I request your immediate attention to these matters.

Allegations from these whistleblowers include information that numerous FAA employees, including those involved in the Aircraft Evaluation Group (AEG) for the Boeing 737 MAX, had not received proper training and valid certifications. Some of these FAA employees were possibly involved as participants on the Flight Standardization Board (FSB). As you know, the AEG formed an FSB to evaluate the 737 MAX 8 to determine the requirements for pilot type ratings, to develop minimum training recommendations, and to ensure initial flightcrew member competency.

In light of recent 737 crashes in Indonesia and Ethiopia, the committee is investigating any potential connection between inadequate training and certification of Aviation Safety Inspectors who may have participated in the FSB evaluation of the 737 MAX. Specifically, the committee is concerned that such potential lack of training and certification of FAA ASI, and participation of those ASI on the FSB, may have led to an improper evaluation of the Maneuvering Characteristics Augmentation System (MCAS). If true, this raises the question of whether a specific reference to the MCAS system should have been included in the FSB report.

According to information obtained from whistleblowers and a review of documents obtained by the committee, the FAA may have been notified about these deficiencies as early as August 2018. Furthermore, the committee is led to believe that an FAA investigation into these allegations may have been completed recently.

I request that you provide the committee with the following information no later than April 16, 2019:

1. Has the FAA been alerted to allegations of deficiencies related to the training and certification of FAA Aviation Safety Inspectors?
2. If the FAA was aware of these allegations, please provide a detailed accounting of the specific dates involved when the FAA was made aware of potential deficiencies related to the training and certification of FAA pilots and safety inspectors.
3. Provide any and all information regarding FAA officials who were made aware of these allegations, actions taken, and dates of such action.
4. Was an agency investigation initiated?
5. When was an investigation initiated?
6. What FAA official initiated the investigation?
7. What FAA officials were made aware of the investigation and when?
8. What is the current status of the investigation?
9. If the investigation is complete, include a copy of the entire and un-redacted report to the committee with the agency's responses.

Thank you for your prompt and urgent attention to these requests. Please contact Robert Turner of the committee majority staff at (202) 224-1251 should you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Roger J. Wicker
Chairman

Cc: The Honorable Elaine Chao, United States Secretary of Transportation
The Honorable Calvin Scovel, III, Inspector General, U.S. Department of Transportation