June 17, 2026

The Honorable Ted Cruz, Chairman
The Honorable Maria Cantwell, Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran, Chair
The Honorable Tammy Duckworth, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Aviation, Space, and Innovation
Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Cruz, Ranking Member Cantwell, Chair Moran, and Ranking Member Duckworth:

On behalf of the International Air Transport Association (IATA),[1] I am writing to express our strong support for the Let Experienced Pilots Fly Act (S. 4452), which would raise the mandatory retirement age for commercial airline pilots from 65 to 67. This is a timely and practical step that will help strengthen the aviation workforce while maintaining the highest safety standards.

The aviation industry continues to face real staffing challenges, many of which became more apparent during the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. Airlines have struggled to meet demand and maintain service – especially to smaller and rural communities – largely due to a shortage of qualified pilots. Allowing experienced pilots to continue flying for an additional two years will help ease these pressures and provide much-needed stability to the system.

At the same time, the case for updating the retirement age is supported by clear trends. People are living longer, healthier lives, and advances in medical screening, training, and technology have significantly improved safety outcomes across the industry. Pilots today undergo regular, rigorous medical examinations and must consistently demonstrate their skills through simulator checks and proficiency testing. These safeguards ensure that only those who are fully capable continue to operate, regardless of age.

Importantly, there is no evidence to suggest that raising the retirement age to 67 would compromise safety. In fact, many countries already allow pilots to fly domestically beyond age

[1] IATA is the trade association of the world's airlines, representing some 370 passenger and cargo airlines in over 120 countries and carrying 83 percent of the world's air traffic.

65,[2] and some permit international operations as well under certain conditions. These examples demonstrate that policies can be updated thoughtfully while maintaining strong oversight and safety performance.

Forcing highly skilled pilots to retire solely based on age – despite their proven ability and ongoing certification – limits the industry's access to valuable expertise. These individuals have decades of experience that contribute directly to operational safety, mentorship for younger pilots, and overall system reliability.

The Let Experienced Pilots Fly Act represents a balanced and common-sense approach. It recognizes the importance of experience, reflects modern realities in health and longevity, and helps ensure that aviation can continue to meet growing demand in the years ahead.

Thank you for your consideration of this important legislation. I encourage you to support its passage.

Sincerely,



Douglas E. Lavin
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[2] Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Japan, New Zealand, and Peru.