

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

February 9, 2026

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington DC 20591

Dear Administrator Bedford:

We write to express concerns about current air traffic controller working conditions as continued staffing shortages have led to an increased reliance on overtime amidst the mounting strain on the national airspace system. As the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is over one year into the implementation of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization law, we are deeply concerned about ensuring that the health and wellbeing of the nation's controller workforce is supported as the agency works to achieve full staffing.

As you know, our nation's controllers are vital to aviation safety. Nationwide, controllers ensure the safe and efficient movement of roughly 45,000 daily flights serving nearly 3 million passengers and cargo operations 24 hours per day, every day of the year.¹ However, stress and fatigue amongst controllers resulting from understaffing and mandatory overtime is a known risk factor in aviation.² As a result, morale amongst controllers is at historic lows, with more than 41 percent of certified professional controllers working 10-hour days, six days a week.³

The 2024 FAA Reauthorization law included many provisions aimed at growing the air traffic controllers workforce, such as requiring the FAA to hire the maximum number of controllers annually, update its controller and aviation safety staffing models, and enhance and expedite training through the installation of tower simulator systems at all FAA air traffic control towers. Furthermore, the 2024 Reauthorization directs the FAA to modernize its aeromedical policies to better support the mental health of the U.S. aviation workforce, including air traffic controllers. These provisions that address controller hiring, training, and staffing will help reduce the strain on our controller workforce and reduce fatigue. However, as the FAA works to implement these provisions, the vast majority of air traffic control facilities remain critically understaffed.

Although we recognize the FAA's progress with implementing the 2024 Reauthorization law, it is crucial that the FAA ensures that controllers are supported for the duration of the staffing shortage and ongoing changes within the agency. For too long, controllers have struggled to use the paid time off that they earned and have experienced scheduling practices that rely too much on overtime to overcome staffing shortages. These talented professionals have dedicated their lives to aviation safety, and the FAA must prioritize their health and safety as they work to reach full staffing.

¹ <https://nap.nationalacademies.org/catalog/29112/the-air-traffic-controller-workforce-imperative-staffing-models-and-their>

² <https://www.nationalacademies.org/news/2025/06/actions-from-federal-government-needed-to-alleviate-air-traffic-controller-staffing-shortages-at-many-facilities-says-new-report>

³ <https://www.natca.org/2025/06/18/national-academies-of-sciences-report-doubles-down-on-failed-controller-staffing-model/>

To better understand the implementation of the 2024 FAA Reauthorization law and FAA's efforts to alleviate burdens caused by controller understaffing, please provide written responses to the following questions by March 5, 2026.

1. When does the FAA project it will reach full staffing levels for fully certified professional controllers?
2. What is the FAA's plan to reduce burdens on controllers in understaffed air traffic facilities and implement a more robust fatigue risk management system until they are fully staffed, including:
 - a. reducing reliance on mandatory overtime;
 - b. a lack of access to using their paid time off.
3. What is the status of the FAA's work to support the mental health of all aviation safety professionals, including addressing controller fatigue?
4. Will the FAA commit to publishing controller staffing numbers for Congress on a quarterly basis instead of annually?

In order to maintain the safest, most efficient aviation system in the world, it is vital that the FAA prioritize the health and wellbeing of air traffic controllers and other aviation safety professionals. We look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Nicholas J. Begich III
Congressman for All Alaska



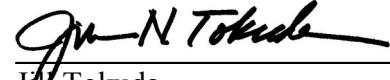
Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress



Adam Smith
Member of Congress



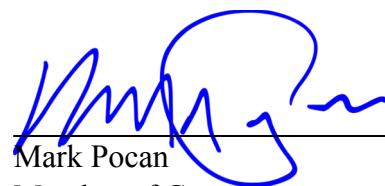
Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Jim Tokuda
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Shri Thanedar
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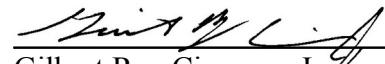
Betty McCollum
Member of Congress



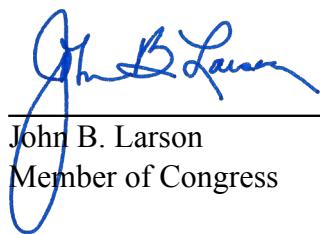
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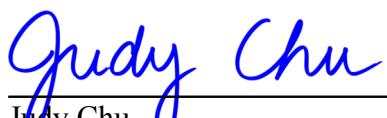
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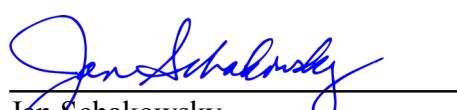
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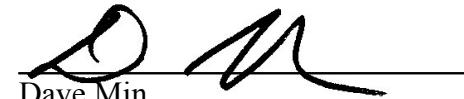
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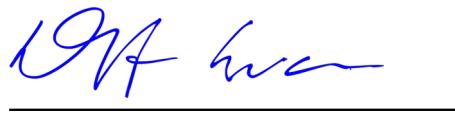
Dave Min
Member of Congress



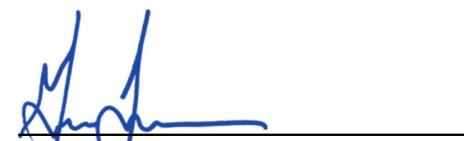
Nikki Budzinski
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Kevin Mullin
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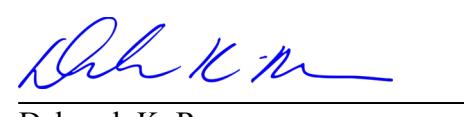
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Greg Landsman
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
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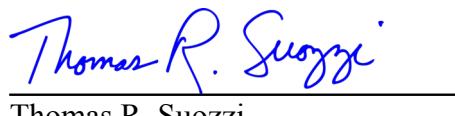
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