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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

February 7, 2025

The Honorable Sean Duffy
Secretary
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue, SE
Washington, DC 20590

Dear Secretary Duffy,

The **FAA William J. Hughes Technical Center for Advanced Aerospace** is a leading federal aviation research and validation facility in New Jersey that supports critical National Airspace System (NAS) functions. The Technical Center was recently written into U.S. Code Title 49 Section 106 through the FAA Reauthorization of 2024. This new statutory authority positions the Technical Center to lead the development of a new generation of aviation safety technology and the new entrant airspace integration mission. The below infrastructure, program and personnel investments are essential to solving our Nation's most pressing airspace challenges.

This preeminent research and development facility conducts essential work related to the validation of aviation safety technology. With the Secretary's focus on using technology to improve aviation safety, these investments are essential to accomplishing his long-term mission.

Facilities and Equipment Account: (\$62 million)

This level of facilities infrastructure funding is consistent with the amount currently provided for in the FY25 House Republican THUD budget. Investments must continue at this level to maintain this nationally leading airspace research and validation asset.

1. NAS Priority 1 Facility - Disaster Resiliency of NAS Critical Systems (\$6 Million)

This project focuses on upgrading Priority One Lab infrastructure to enhance the Critical Power Distribution system, provide necessary cooling for essential equipment, and ensure resilient data transmission.

2. William J. Hughes Technical Center Civil Systems Sustainment (\$29 Million)

The design and construction of a water supply system and underground utilities for all tenants at the Technical Center, including the Atlantic City Airport.

3. **William J. Hughes Technical Center Electrical Systems Sustainment (\$27 Million)**

The design and construction of a replacement electrical system to supply power to the Airport Operations Area, covering all airfield lighting and navigational aids.

Research, Engineering and Development Account: (\$10 million)

1. **Emerging Technologies Accelerator (\$10 Million)**

The program provides a pathway for development, demonstration, and transfer of technology that can lead to a tangible operational improvement to the aviation infrastructure. Objectives include progression of selected innovation proposals from initial consideration to technology transfer within three years.

At a hearing of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Aviation Subcommittee, Administrator Whitaker committed to advancing this item in the FY26 budget.

Personnel Accounts: (+\$8,364,224)

To meet its new statutory mission the FAA must reverse the trend of personnel attrition at the Technical Center. There are 56 total new positions which need to be approved and filled:

- Operations: +22 Positions (\$3,244,325)
- Facilities and Equipment: +29 Positions (\$4,159,707)
- Research, Engineering and Development: +5 Positions (\$960,191)

Federal Aviation Administration (continued)

Positions include Aerospace Engineers, Civil Engineers, Computer Engineers, Computer Scientists, Data Scientists, Electrical Engineers, General Engineers, IT Specialists, Program Managers, Safety and Occupational Health Specialists, Telecommunication Specialists, and Student Interns.

These positions will be utilized for functions including Advanced Air Mobility Integration, Contracting, Cybersecurity, Facility Management, Infrastructure, NAS Modernization, Maintenance of Priority One NAS facilities, Portfolio Management, Test and Evaluation, and Cloud Environment Data Transfer.

These new positions are justified by the numerous essential benefits they will provide to the Center and to the Nation. These include:

- Ensuring modernization efforts are properly evaluated prior to NAS incorporation.
- Bringing new aviation capabilities from concept to implementation through research, development, integration, testing, deployment and support.
- Addressing the backlog of deferred maintenance of facility infrastructure while ensuring that campus buildings, including NAS laboratories, remain operational.
- Maintaining infrastructure that supports tenant organizations.
- Conducting inherently governmental oversight of safety critical and contractor work.
- Establishing a workforce pipeline where local student interns are given opportunities for eventual full employment.

Without filling these positions, we will see severe challenges to the ability to perform new, state-of-the-art, aviation modernization work and the ability to maintain critical infrastructure. It will not be possible for the Center to achieve its statutory mission otherwise. Continued workforce attrition is anticipated without the requested additional budget authorizations and allocations.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jeff Van Drew', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff Van Drew

Member of Congress