



May 23rd, 2019
Ohio Senate Finance Committee
Senator Matt Dolan, Chair
Senate Building
1 Capitol Square, Columbus OH 43215

RE: H.B. No 166 / FY 2020-2021 Operating Budget – Aviation Funding

Chair Dolan, Vice-Chair Burke, Ranking Member Sykes and finance committee members,

My name is Kyle Lewis, Great Lakes Regional Manager for the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA). On behalf of our 330,000 members in the United States and 9,300 members in the State of Ohio, AOPA supports a funding increase to \$16 million for aviation related infrastructure needs. Currently, Ohio is not in compliance with FAA policy on aviation fuel tax revenue as reflected in the attached FAA policy documents. The state of Ohio is funding aviation from a general revenue fund line item at \$5.9 million. FAA policy encourages states to create a dedicated aviation fund, with monies derived from the sales tax revenue of aviation fuels. While the current funding level is nearly 5 times more than just a few years ago, aviation infrastructure needs severely outweigh projected infrastructure improvements in Ohio. Over the next 20 years, \$420 million will need to be invested in airport pavements alone. Taxiways, parking ramps, and runways are deteriorating at a rate faster than the state or FAA dollars can keep up with, and local municipalities do not have the financial resources for large projects like a runway rehabilitation, which can easily top \$1 million per runway.

The 2014 economic impact study commissioned by the Ohio Department of Transportation and the FAA states that aviation contributes \$29.6 million to Ohio's general revenue fund and provides a total economic impact of \$13 billion. As the funding currently exists, it must be appropriated each budget cycle, and is subject to political sway. A dedicated aviation fund, as AOPA and the FAA advocate for, will be immune to politics and allow a stable funding stream



based on activity and growth. With a dedicated and robust funding stream for aviation in Ohio, airport managers in the state can budget for and request grant dollars from the FAA Airport Improvement Program, funded annually at \$3.55 billion. These federal finds can be leveraged for larger projects at general aviation and commercial service airports across Ohio.

Corporate and general aviation play a vital role connecting rural communities to the region and the nation. Pilots and aircraft owners access Ohio's public use airports for many purposes, including medical transportation, agricultural operations, law enforcement, emergency response operations, flight training, and recreational aviation. It is these users that provide sales tax revenues from aviation fuel sales which should be solely dedicated to an aviation fund. AOPA fully supports these revenues being directed back into Ohio's aviation ecosystem.

AOPA also supports the amendment (SC-3828) submitted by Senator Hackett on the aviation student loan program. As the largest and most comprehensive aviation association in the world, AOPA is intimately familiar with the ongoing workforce shortage to include pilots, mechanics, and other aviation professionals. AOPA has succeeded in turning around the decline in the number of pilots in the United States and is leading the aviation industry to meet the workforce demands for the next several decades. The ongoing pilot shortage is attracting many new students to Flight schools, including university level flight training programs, and many are operating near capacity. Commercial Airline operators are actively recruiting pilots which is driving a significant increase in the number of student pilot certificates issued by the FAA. But flight training is expensive, and for a new student pilot, the cost factor may prevent some from pursuing this important and rewarding career. To obtain an Airline Transport Pilot (ATP) rating, an investment of nearly \$100,000 is needed. Traditional student loans do not cover all these expenses, which discourages eligible students from pursuing this highly technical flight training. A \$15 million revolving loan program for aviation education in undergraduate programs, technical schools, and community colleges would strengthen the investment in



Ohio's workforce. There are multiple opportunities for students to stay in Ohio while starting a career in aviation, including two of the largest corporate jet fractional ownership operations in the world – NetJets, based in Columbus, and Flexjet, based in Cleveland. These corporate aviation operators need to grow their workforce and are actively recruiting now.

Ohio is the birthplace of aviation and has deep roots in the worldwide aviation industry. Sadly, Ohio is being left behind on many aspects in aviation. Lack of aviation infrastructure funding and lack of workforce development will drive Ohio farther behind other competing states and markets. Midwestern states like Minnesota and North Dakota are heavily investing in aviation infrastructure. North Dakota recently passed a bill that will allow up to \$20 million in aviation funding dedicated to general aviation airport infrastructure and upgrades. Minnesota invests just over \$20 million in aviation infrastructure, including monies for routine maintenance and upkeep at general aviation airports. Now is the time for Ohio to invest in its aviation future.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony on behalf of all pilots in Ohio.

Kyle Lewis

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