



June 17, 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, thank you for your time. My name is Kyle Lewis, Great Lakes Regional Manager for Government Affairs with the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA).

On behalf of our membership in the State of Ohio, AOPA opposes a language change in section 411.17 of House Bill 166 (Airport Improvement) that would include commercial service and cargo dedicated airports in the Department of Transportation – Office of Aviation Grant Program for airports. AOPA is asking for commercial and cargo dedicated airports to remain ineligible for state level grant funding and strike the language in 411.17 allowing these airports to participate in the grant program. This proposed shift in language would allow for commercial and cargo service airports to compete directly with small general aviation airports for limited grant funds administered by ODOT-Office of Aviation. In the last 3 years, over 60 million dollars of grant funding has been requested by general aviation airports across the state. The state has awarded approximately 18 million dollars over the previous 3 years, including matching 50 percent of the local 10 percent share for FAA funded projects. These state funded projects are aimed at safety and maintaining airport infrastructure like runways, taxiways and aircraft parking ramps. In the state grant program, airports are scored using an unbiased matrix system, based on preventive maintenance plans already in place at small general aviation airports. The scoring is also based on current pavement quality, type of project requested, and the ability of the local airport sponsor to match the local share of the grant. If commercial and cargo airports began to compete with small general aviation airports, the result would be a traumatic blow to Ohio's small airport and general aviation ecosystem.

Ohio's small airports serve a wide variety of aircraft and aeronautical operators. Public safety, medical airlift flights, corporate aviation, charity flights, agricultural operators, flight training, flying clubs, maintenance facilities, and personal aircraft all use Ohio's small general aviation airports. The vast majority of Ohio's



registered based aircraft are stored at and use these small airports. Many of Ohio's airports are operated by a county or city, and fight for funds at the local level on a daily basis. The opportunity to receive state grant dollars is a welcome sight for already strained local budgets. To put this in perspective, small airports have limited sources of income. Fuel sales, hangar rents, land or building leases for aviation purposes, some even resort to leasing land for approved agricultural purposes. Commercial service airports have other funding sources aside from federal grant dollars, such as commercial passenger facility fees also known as enplanement fees, concession and vendor leases/fees, vehicle parking, larger leaseholds for aeronautical providers, leaseholds for other airport service providers, and the list goes on and on. For example, John Glenn International Airport in Columbus reported over \$30 million dollars in airline passenger facility revenues in 2018. The airport also reported 2018 revenues in excess of \$63 million dollars related to food and beverage, concessions, vehicle parking, land leases, and terminal retail sales.

If commercial service airports are eligible to compete directly with small general aviation airports, it is not a fair match. Commercial service airports will likely score higher on the current funding matrix for grant awards, making it even tougher for small airports to receive the already highly competitive grants. Testimony was submitted to this committee on June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2019 by 13 airports, all small general aviation airports across the state. The theme was common among all airports, support a substantial funding increase to \$16 million to the Ohio Airport Improvement Grant Program, support a \$15 million grant program for air service development, and create a revolving student loan program for aviation related studies. There was one blatant issue missing from all testimony submitted by these airports; the language change to allow commercial and cargo service airports the eligibility to participate in the ODOT Airport Improvement Grant Program. There is a simple reason for this. Small general aviation airports would suffer if the program allowed these larger commercial airports to participate. All of the airports that submitted testimony applauded the state's grant program and the ability to complete safety oriented and infrastructure projects that would likely have gone undone without the grants awarded. These monies do make a difference to small airports.

On behalf of AOPA's membership in Ohio, we urge this committee to strike language allowing commercial service and cargo dedicated airports the ability to participate in the ODOT Airport improvement Grant



Program. The current funding level is not suited for these large airports, and the effects on general aviation may be irreversible.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this issue.

The Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association (AOPA) is the world's largest aviation organization, representing nearly 330,000 pilots, aircraft owners, and aviation enthusiasts, of which over 9,200 reside in the State of Ohio.

Kyle Lewis

Regional Manager for Government Affairs and Airport Advocacy / Great Lakes Region  
AOPA

cc:

*Dave Burke, Vice Chair*  
*Vernon Sykes, Ranking Member*  
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