

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-1604

January 14, 2020

The Honorable Steve Dickson
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20591

Administrator Dickson:

The purpose of this letter is to express my concern over the ongoing grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX aircraft. I represent the Fourth District of Kansas, which is home to Wichita, Kansas—the Air Capital of the World. Aviation manufacturing is not only vital to our economy, but also our community and way of life.

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) deserves true praise in its professionalism and willingness to treat the ongoing Boeing 737 MAX situation with caution. Aviation regulators, manufacturers, and passengers across the world all agree that aircraft safety is the top priority. I wholeheartedly support the mission to ensure the safety of the aircraft and in turn restore the trust of passengers, but I also want to ensure that in prioritizing safety, the livelihoods of the hardworking men and women who contribute to the construction of the 737 MAX, or those who work for an airline that would like to meet its intentions in flying the 737 MAX are not jeopardized.

I am concerned that the FAA is following a process for returning the 737 MAX to service that is not guided by a defined process with standards, expectations, and a schedule. Additionally, in your testimony to the House Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure during the December 11, 2019 hearing to examine the FAA's oversight of the aircraft's certification, you stated that the return-to-service decision will rest solely on the FAA's analysis of the data to determine whether Boeing's proposed software updates and pilot training address the known issues for grounding the aircraft.

I am aware that the FAA will require flight certification tests, completion of work by the Joint Operations Evaluation Board (JOEB) and the Technical Advisory Board (TAB) before air worthiness is restored. However, I am concerned that these requirements are not clearly defined, leaving manufacturers, suppliers, and air carriers wondering what other prerequisites the FAA will demand and for how long their livelihoods will be impacted.

While I previously did not expect the FAA to have the capacity to provide an exact date as to when air worthiness will be restored, I request that in carrying out the remainder the recertification process, the FAA fulfill their mission of safety in a clear process with defined standards. This should include directly laying out the milestones and standards that the FAA expects Boeing to meet. Additionally, it is my hope that the FAA will continue to be the international leader in aviation safety, rather than follow in the footsteps of the European Union Aviation Safety Agency (EASA) as the recertification process continues.

The process of recertifying the 737 MAX continues to have negative repercussions that are not limited to Boeing or the dozens of airlines who hope to fly the aircraft again. Spirit AeroSystems in Wichita, Kansas is the largest employer in my district and is the largest supplier for the 737 MAX aircraft. Boeing's decision to halt 737 MAX production led to Spirit AeroSystems' decision to layoff 2,800 employees in Wichita on January 10, 2020. Although Wichita is likely the community in the United States that is hardest hit by the production halt, dozens of suppliers throughout Kansas and the country are also seeing the economic detriment that the 737 MAX grounding continues to bear. Until recertification is complete, thousands of workers will continue to face unemployment.

Thank you for your dedication to ensuring that the United States continues to lead in aircraft safety throughout the world and I look forward to working together to resolve this ongoing issue.

Sincerely,



Congressman Ron Estes