

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 19, 2025

Chris Rocheleau  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Ave, SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Acting Administrator Rocheleau:

I am alarmed about the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) abrupt firing of hundreds of FAA employees. In the wake of multiple deadly airplane crashes, Congress and the flying public need a more detailed explanation.

At a minimum, we need to know why this sudden reduction was necessary, what type of work these employees were doing, and what kind of analysis FAA conducted – if any – to ensure this would not adversely impact safety, increase flight delays or harm FAA operations.

A broad assurance that no air traffic controllers or critical safety personnel were terminated does not answer these questions. FAA's mission is safety, and its critical safety personnel cannot do their jobs without proper resources. For example, air traffic controllers rely on systems to manage communications, monitor weather and conduct surveillance and navigation. Maintaining these systems is essential. Yet, according to a press report impacted FAA employees include individuals hired to work on, "FAA radar, landing and navigational aid maintenance."<sup>1</sup>

Our Nation's aviation system has struggled since the pandemic, when so much experience left our workforce. We saw a spike in close calls, in response to which FAA held a safety summit to try to figure out ways to build back our safety margin.

Congress held hearings and passed a bipartisan FAA Reauthorization Act to help address the air traffic controller shortage and boost other critical parts of the aviation workforce. The law also provides safety enhancements like airport surface situational awareness technologies.

FAA should be laser focused on implementing this law, restoring our aviation system's safety margin and preventing more tragic crashes. I do not understand how terminating these employees furthers this goal, and FAA has yet to provide an explanation.

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<sup>1</sup> Tara Copp, "Trump begins firings of FAA staff just weeks after fatal DC plane crash," Associated Press, February 17, 2025, accessed here: <https://apnews.com/article/doge-faa-air-traffic-firings-safety-67981aec33b6ee72cbad8dcee31f3437>

Please provide responses to the following by 12pm E.T. on Friday February 21, 2025:

1. Why did FAA find it necessary to fire nearly 400 probationary employees?
2. How does firing these nearly 400 probationary employees improve safety for the flying public?
3. Please provide a breakdown of the types of positions the fired probationary employees held, including how many were fired from each type of position.
4. How many of these terminations were performance-based?
5. Did FAA conduct an analysis of the impact these firings would have on passenger safety, flight delays and FAA operations? If so, please provide the result of that analysis. If FAA did not conduct any such impact analysis, please so state.

Sincerely,



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Tammy Duckworth  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Aviation,  
Space and Innovation  
Innovation  
Senate Committee on  
Commerce, Science and  
Transportation