

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

9 May 2018

The Honorable John Thune
Chairman, Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee
512 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Thune:

Last year, the Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee included important provisions in S. 1405 that will support air services in rural communities. As the Senate moves toward legislation to reauthorize the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), I urge you to maintain the following provisions as part of any package that is moved to the floor.

First, S. 1405 reauthorizes the Essential Air Service (EAS) program from fiscal year (FY) 2018 through FY 2021. It maintains the Congressional authorization at \$175 million, the same as in FY 2016 and FY 2017. EAS ensures small communities maintain a minimal level of air service. There are currently seven airports in Nebraska eligible for EAS support: Alliance, Chadron, Grand Island, Kearney, McCook, North Platte, and Scottsbluff. Without this critical program, I am concerned that rural access to air travel would be significantly limited.

Second, this bill reauthorizes the Federal Contract Tower Program, which has enjoyed strong bipartisan, bicameral support. This program has enhanced safety, generated cost savings for both the FAA and taxpayers, and improved air traffic control services. The Central Nebraska Regional Airport in Grand Island, Nebraska, has witnessed these benefits first hand. S. 1405 also includes important reforms to the program, such as exempting airports with more than 25,000 enplanements in 2014 from cost share requirements and ensuring airports have an adequate opportunity to respond to benefit/cost analyses. While certain provisions regarding the Contract Tower Program in S. 1405 could be improved, the overall program is critical and should be maintained.

We must ensure rural communities continue to have access to air services that connect them to families and businesses across our country. I strongly support both of these programs addressed in S. 1405. I look forward to working closely with you as the Senate considers an FAA reauthorization during the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,



Deb Fischer
United States Senator

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