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**U.S. Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation
Aviation Safety, Operations, and Innovation Subcommittee Field Hearing**

**“Developing the Aviation Workforce for the 21st Century”
May 13, 2022**

**Submitted by Greg Wilson,
Academic Dean for Applied Technology – Pima Community College**

Good morning, Chair Sinema and members of the Subcommittee. My name is Greg Wilson, and I serve as the Dean of Applied Technology at Pima Community College in Tucson, Arizona. Thank you for the opportunity to address you this morning.

Pima Community College’s Aviation Technology Center operates a state-of-the art training facility located on the grounds of the Tucson International Airport. It provides students the opportunity to study aircraft maintenance in a hands-on learning environment combining lectures, hands-on work, and independent projects. The program is rigorous—I’ll elaborate more on that in just a moment--and our program holds its students to the industry’s highest standards. As a result, it has a national reputation for excellence, and places nearly 90 percent of its graduates in high-demand jobs in aerospace and defense soon after graduation.

In spite of our success, frankly we need your help. The industry predicts that close to 200,000 new aircraft maintenance technicians will be needed in North America over the next 17-18 years. Close to 30% of the current ranks of aircraft mechanics are at or near retirement age. Closer to home, Economic Modeling Specialists, Inc. (EMSI), estimates a 40% increase in available Aviation positions for the Southern Arizona region alone, compared to the national average of 10%. Pima County represents the largest concentration of aviation occupations in the Southern Arizona region with 87% of the jobs reported (1,336 of 1,534).

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) reports that, nationally, the aviation sector accounts for more than 5 percent of the U.S. gross domestic product, contributes \$1.6 trillion in total economic activity and supports nearly 11 million jobs. Moreover, aviation manufacturing continues to be the nation's top net export (FAA, 2016). In Arizona, aviation is a significant economic catalyst. Over 470,000 jobs are directly or indirectly related to the sector, and it contributes more than \$38 billion to the state's economy (ACA, 2017). As such, the aviation sector plays a key role in supporting and building on Arizona's economic strengths, and possesses strong potential for bringing high-wage, high-demand jobs and increased business to the state and region.

Supporting this vibrant sector takes a qualified workforce of highly trained technicians and specialized MRO (Maintenance, Repair, and Operations) facilities that maintain and rehabilitate commercial and military aircraft fleets.

According to the Aeronautical Repair Station Association's (ARSA) 2017 report titled U.S.

Employment and Economic Impact by State, aviation maintenance employs more than 277,000 people and generates over \$44 billion in economic activity nationally. In Arizona, total aviation maintenance employment is approximately 16,000, the sixth highest in the nation, and Arizona's MRO operations have a total economic activity of \$4 billion, the third highest in the nation, behind only California and Washington (ARSA, 2017).

The Tucson region is host to significant MROs, including Bombardier Aerospace and Ascent Aviation, and the state is host to Boeing, Northrop Grumman, and others. These companies employ thousands of skilled aviation maintenance professionals, contributing greatly to the region's economic wellbeing.

I am participating this morning to encourage you to increase funding to support Aviation Technology programs like the program we offer at Pima Community College (PCC). I mentioned our program's national and international reputation for excellence, and its rigor. Students complete 2,000 hours of training, over 100 exams, and nearly 300 hands-on projects. The program offers an Associate of Applied Science degree in Aviation Technology and accompanying certificates for direct employment in the core skill areas of: (1) Airframe and Power-plant (2) Structural Repair, and (3) Avionics. The program is designed to replicate the industry to provide students with a real-world experience throughout the program. PCC is one of about half of FAA-approved schools offering an Aviation Maintenance associate's degree. PCC is one of only a handful of U.S. schools offering the highly sought-after Advanced Structural Repair and Modification, and commercial jet transport and Avionics training. Pima Community College is one of only two U.S. educational institutions that

received two aircraft donations from FedEx. Both are Boeing 727s, making PCC's program one of the few U.S. programs providing hands-on training on commercial and regional jets. Additionally, we are building a drone certification program and we will offer a nondestructive testing (NDT) program next year. Additionally, we work closely with our high school partners and deliver introductory courses for juniors and seniors.

To help meet the demand referenced above, we are expanding the physical footprint and capacity of our Aviation Technology Center with a scheduled completion this summer. Our building is expanding to two hangars capable of servicing large commercial jets, and our facility will increase from 35K sq. ft. to 80K sq. ft. Our program capacity will increase from 125 students to 250 students, and we will increase our yearly graduates from 75 to 175. These graduates will be placed into Aviation jobs with median annual earnings ranging from \$57,600 to \$65,800. These increases and improvements are significant, and the one-time state appropriation of \$15M instigated by Governor Ducey has made a great impact on our operations. We have been able to cut into our 1-1.5-year waitlist. The economic benefit for the state is also significant. The total of new jobs that will be supported is 455 with new direct payroll of \$15.6M. The total new payroll supported is over \$65M and new property tax revenues are expected to \$2.4M. New sales tax revenue is estimated at \$445K. The total economic impact is estimated to be over \$255.5M over five years. That is a 13:1 return on investment!

But we need to do more. We need your support to strengthen efforts by educators, workforce development programs, and economic development organizations to align education and workforce training programs with employer needs. We need sustainable state operations funding for

community college career and technical education programs that support student success and meet the diverse needs of students, industry, and our communities.

As of today, Pima Community College and Maricopa Community College still do not receive state FTSE-based operations funding. It is essential that outstanding programs like Pima's are supported financially to adapt to changing practices and technologies to ensure that we are preparing our students to enter the industry with the expected skills and abilities.

Thank you for your support. I look forward to addressing your questions.