

March 20, 2023

Senator Maria Cantwell, Chair
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

Senator Ted Cruz, Ranking Member
Committee on Commerce, Science and
Transportation
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Cantwell and Ranking Member Cruz:

The undersigned ET302 crash victim family members support Phil Washington as the next FAA administrator. FAA needs an outsider who can step into leadership vacuums, transform complex organizations, and resist the aviation swamp pressures towards mediocrity and malaise that are driven by self interest and stock price goals. The safety changes sought by our crash families over the past four years were more often hindered rather than helped by the vast majority of the aviation industry organizations and government institutions. Therefore we are not concerned about any lack of direct aviation experience.

We worked alongside this Committee to enact meaningful reforms in the Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act (ACSAA). This includes ending undue influence on engineers acting on behalf of the FAA and starting the reform of the Organization Designation Authorization program. Congress drew clearer lines between the regulator and the regulated industry.

The next FAA Administrator must lead the effort to fully implement these key safety reforms. More work needs to be done, from increasing individual accountability and transparency at the FAA, to ensuring that the agency follows through on service difficulty and malfunction reports on newly-manufactured aircraft.

Mr. Washington's no nonsense leadership, decision making and performance from his military service and his post-military service give us confidence that he can and will spur a transformative safety and quality change in the very large and dysfunctional FAA with a focus upon safety that is not limited to verbal assurances and self protection.

He does not come from an aviation lobbying group, as former administrator Marion Blakey did in 2002. Blakey helped establish the Organization Designation Authority system in the 2000s, which delivered self-regulation into Boeing's untrustworthy hands.

Unlike former administrator Randy Babbitt, Mr. Washington is not looking for a next job with Southwest Airlines, a company which incentivized Boeing to hide MCAS by committing to large MAX purchase orders in 2011 that included large penalties if pilot training was required by the FAA certification process.

Phil Washington is not an industry-committed pilot, like former acting administrator Dan Elwell who refused to ground the MAX after the Indonesian Air crash despite FAA risk assessment documents projecting 15 more crashes. And who helped Boeing's messaging to blame the pilots.

He is not a pilot like Steve Dickson, who came from Delta Airlines and refused to meet with ET302 crash family members until Transportation Secretary Chao ordered him to do so in the fall of 2019. Dickson was a primary actor in the de facto career assassination - by way of a fraudulent mental health examination - of a Delta pilot notifying him about safety problems. Dickson's actions led to the largest monetary award for an aviation whistleblower.

The crash of Flight ET302, a new Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft, on March 10, 2019 was enabled by regulatory capture of the FAA and - at times - Congress, by Boeing and the aviation industry.

Excessive delegation of both design and production certification to Boeing was caused by Congress and past FAA administrators in the last 20 years as the Organization Designation Authority system was established and implemented.

We continue to witness dangerous coziness between FAA career staff and industry, and the exclusion of passenger and crash family input even as more safety pledge bromides are offered routinely and repeatedly. A recent FAA hearing on the future of the Changed Product Rule, for example, was astoundingly held at the General Aviation Manufacturers Association (that represents the regulated industry) rather than at FAA.

We ET302 families prioritize independence from the aviation industry, the ability to step into a leadership vacuum, transform large complex organizations, and a true focus upon aviation safety improvement beyond where we are now. We believe Mr. Washington exhibits these qualities and shares these goals.

As a result, we endorse Mr. Washington.

Sincerely,

Catherine Berthet, mother of Camille Geoffroy
Naoise Ryan, wife of Mick Ryan
Michael Stumo and Nadia Milleron, parents of Samya Rose Stumo
Ike and Susan Riffel, parents of Melvin and Bennett Riffel
Chris Moore, father of Danielle Moore
Javier De Luis, brother of Graziella de Luis y Ponce