



Association of Professional Flight Attendants

Proudly Representing the Flight Attendants of American Airlines

Office of the President

**Testimony by Lori L. Bassani, National President
of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants (APFA)
to the Committee of Transportation and Infrastructure
Regarding the Boeing 737 MAX**

June 19, 2019

On behalf of the National President of the Association of Professional Flight Attendants (APFA), I am submitting this testimony to the Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure. APFA is the largest mainline Flight Attendant Union in the world and represents the 28,000 plus Flight Attendants of American Airlines. First and foremost, APFA grieves for our professional colleagues, the 12 Flight Attendants who lost their lives in the Lion Air and Ethiopia Airlines crashes, as well as for the 330 passengers and 4 pilots who perished. These people expected the Boeing 737 MAX 8 planes they were flying on and operating to be fit for service. We now know that they were not.

These accidents account for a massive loss of life. In the wake of this loss, we are left with a dire commitment to fulfill. As safety professionals, we in the aviation industry must ensure that accidents like these never happen again. We need our investigative agencies to set aside all political interests to uncover exactly what happened with the MAX 8 and why it happened. We need our agencies to spare no expense, or time, to ensure that when the 737 MAX returns to the air it is 100% airworthy.

The members of APFA are and will be on the forefront of the issues surrounding the MAX 8. Aside from Southwest, American Airlines flies the largest fleet of the MAX 8 among all airlines. The 24 planes in our fleet have been pulled from service and this has affected over 100 flights a day. The flying public and schedules of flight crew have been impacted.

Though various parties will be involved in determining the timeline to get the MAX 8 in operation again, as Flight Attendants, we will be the ones fielding the questions and concerns of passengers when the plane is reintroduced. Our Flight

Attendants must be included every step of the way as they must be 100 percent comfortable and confident in the aircraft's airworthiness to transport customers and crew.

Let me state that we have the highest regard for our pilots, members of our brother union, the Allied Pilots Association, which represents American Airlines' pilots. We stand in solidarity with APA as they continue to advocate for what they need to feel confident in the aircraft they are flying. Recently, it was reported that our flight deck crewmembers were denied access to a 737 MAX simulator. APA wanted their own safety experts to test this full-motion simulator that has integrated the new fixes for the Boeing MCAS before it went through the FAA certification process. Our pilots expected to be able to test these new systems prior to certification so that their input would have real bearing on the final solution. In a statement last week, Jason Goldberg, a spokesperson for APA said, "We really have no idea why this stance would be taken towards our participation. We can't understand why." We don't either. This is not acceptable. The pilots who fly the 737 MAX every day must be involved, like the Flight Attendants at every step in the reintroduction.

I would like to point out one key issue that must be addressed prior to the 737 MAX going back into service. The overriding question or issue is one of trust. Does the public, and do our Flight Attendants and pilots, trust our management, the FAA, and Boeing to make their decisions solely based on safety?

Let me be clear. While we understand management's position that the grounding of the 737 MAX has created a hardship during the busy summer travel season, financial considerations should never trump safety. We applaud Mr. Ali Bahrami, the FAA's Associate Administrator for Safety, who recently stated that although the FAA is "under a lot of pressure," the MAX would be returned to service *only* after design reviews, flight testing and the other safety checks are successfully completed. While Mr. Bahrami was reluctant to give a date, he agreed with Boeing's estimate of a return by the end of 2019. We believe the public gets mixed messages when members of AA management make arbitrary statements that the MAX will be "ready to go" by mid-August. Let me assure you that as cabin crew, we spend the greatest amount of time with the traveling public and they rely on us to reaffirm that we have, and will continue to have, the safest aviation system in the world. As Flight Attendant safety professionals, our top priority is safety, period.

To underscore the trust deficit that our regulators and manufacturers have developed, NPR recently polled its listeners and out of 1,600 respondents, over 1,000 said that they would not fly the MAX when it is returned to service.

Again, I have raised the issue of trust because it is the Flight Attendants who will be on the front line when this plane goes back in the air. If the public does not believe that the process of returning the 737 MAX 8 to service is not the result of a thorough, rigorous, and transparent safety-driven process, then this aircraft will likely be forever tainted.

The Transportation and Infrastructure Committee must continue to exercise its constitutionally mandated responsibility to conduct oversight of executive branch agencies. I congratulate Chairman DeFazio and Chairman Larsen for conducting this important hearing. I look forward to future hearings once the FAA approval software and training fixes are announced. Congress must continue its oversight functions on behalf of all people, airline passengers and crew.