

**Member Day Written Testimony - House Appropriations Subcommittee on Transportation,  
Housing and Urban Development**

Rep. Harriet Hageman (WY At-Large)

Chairman Womack, Ranking Member Clyburn, and Members of the subcommittee:

I am grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today for the subcommittee's Member Day hearing regarding issues of great importance pertaining to the success of Wyoming's air service.

Despite Wyoming being one of the most rural states in the U.S., our air service dates back nearly one hundred years when the City of Cheyenne became a principal stop on the new U.S. Air Mail Service route.<sup>1</sup> Since then, air service in Wyoming has flourished and remains a major contributor to the statewide and local economies.

According to the Wyoming Department of Transportation (WYDOT), total Wyoming passengers numbered over 1.6 million in 2024. Commercial air services' annual economic impacts exceed \$1.5 billion and support over 17,000 jobs statewide.<sup>2</sup> To accommodate this increasing level of demand, Wyoming boasts nine commercial service airports, including one international airport and the only airport in the U.S. located within a national park. Advocating for meaningful investment in federal programs that seek to build upon this momentum and not only preserve but expand rural air service should always remain a priority as we craft our appropriations bills.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ang.af.mil/Media/Article-Display/Article/435741/aviation-history-wyomings-impact/#:~:text=Cheyenne%20became%20the%20focal%20point,8%2C%201920>.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dot.state.wy.us/files/live/sites/wydot/files/shared/Aeronautics/Economic-Impact/Aviation%20Economic%20Impact%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

Last year, in a bipartisan fashion, Congress passed the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024, which, among other valuable provisions, increased the authorization of the Airport Improvement Program (AIP) from \$3.35 to \$4 billion. The importance of AIP funding in Wyoming cannot be overstated as it has repeatedly supported essential airport infrastructure projects—including expanding terminal buildings; rehabilitating aprons, taxiways, and runway lighting; and acquiring snow removal and firefighting equipment—all of which are essential to increasing air traffic capacity and mitigating hazards caused by unpredictable weather, which is simply a fact of life throughout Wyoming and the greater Intermountain West. Failure to adequately fund this program will make it far more difficult for rural airports to maintain their existing infrastructure and accommodate future growth, which will inevitably trickle down to all communities and local businesses that rely upon air service for revenue generated through tourism, freight, and other means.

Just as important as our airport infrastructure is the ability to grow and retain a pipeline of aviation professionals to carry out the critical functions necessary for the continuation of air service. It's no secret that we continue to struggle with nationwide aviation workforce shortages, particularly when it comes to pilots and aviation maintenance technicians. Unfortunately, these deficiencies are uniquely amplified in a state as rural as Wyoming, where the lack of a stable workforce can detrimentally impact the timeliness and quality of our air service, if not resulting in its loss altogether. As of 2020, there were a total of 2,254 aviation employees in Wyoming. Initiatives such as the FAA's Aviation Workforce Development Programs can go a long way to helping fill employment gaps while recruiting and educating the next generation of aviation professionals. Wyoming is a prime example of these objectives as there continues to be a

growing interest in my state for expanding aviation career technical education opportunities, including through new K-12 internship programs and post-secondary pathways to obtain applied science degrees in aviation and aeronautics and commercial pilot certificates.

Finally, I'd like to briefly touch on the issue of assisting smaller communities who are actively seeking to attract increased commercial air service and minimize higher airfares through the Small Community Air Service Development program. Multiple communities across my state are actively competing with other locations nationwide to obtain commercial air service routes, which are almost always in short supply and can be financially burdensome to maintain over a longer period. Initiatives such as the Small Community Air Service Development program are integral in allowing smaller communities to compete in the rural air service market through revenue guarantees, marketing agreements, and the completion of necessary studies.

As previously stated, these are just a few of the many programs and resources that contribute to the success of Wyoming's air service. Ensuring that we are not only fully funding but also reverting program management back to the core principles laid out under the law as opposed to unrelated political objectives is crucial to achieving their intended success. Once again, thank you for allowing me the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to working with each of you as we begin the ever-important process of drafting our appropriations bills for FY26. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff at any point.