

JASMINE CROCKETT
30TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND
ACCOUNTABILITY

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE



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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Written Testimony of Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett
House Transportation & Infrastructure Committee Member Day 4/18/2023

I want to thank the Chairman, Ranking Member, and entire Committee for their time today, and for offering this opportunity to discuss issues that are critical to my District, and this country as we prepare for FAA Reauthorization. Since the 2018 Reauthorization, millions of American families experienced the confusion and frustration of having flights delayed or canceled due to staffing shortages.

These missed flights represent lost opportunities – to see family, to celebrate, to grieve, to work, and so much more. We owe it to our constituents not just to hear their frustrations, but to act on them. That is why we need to bring more people into the aviation workforce.

But we have tried for decades to solve this problem, to no avail. We cannot rely on the same old recruitment strategies. We need to pull out all the stops and ensure we are recruiting from as wide a net as possible. That is why every stakeholder I've talked to, from the airlines, to the airports, the manufacturers to the workers, support having a diverse workforce.

Right now, 85% of pilots are white. That is why I urge the committee to authorize new funding to support HBCUs and HSIs that offer scholarships for students majoring in the aviation field.

I serve on the House Ag committee, and we have a similar program there with our 1890 land grant institutions, and there have been tremendous results. The 1890 universities highlight an important point about this proposal: It is not enough to invest ad hoc in diversity, if we really want to expand the workforce, we need to be investing in institutions.

We know from the land grant universities, that this public seed money will unlock millions more in private funding. This bill will not only bolster our workforce, but expand opportunities. There are first-rate aviation degrees at HBCUs and HSIs, but the scholarships aren't there. That is why all the stakeholders I spoke to in my district, and across north Texas, strongly support investing in scholarships to be administered by HBCUs and HSIs.

But just as important as who flies the planes is where the planes fly: our airports. Every year, tens of millions of families fly through mid-sized hub airports like Dallas Love Field in my district. Many of these airports can only function because of smaller nearby reliever airports, that offload some of the traffic.

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As we have all recently experienced, our aviation system runs on a just-in-time model with no room for delay. Backups at these reliever airports can cascade throughout the system, and cause terrible consequences for our constituents as flights are delayed or cancelled. Often the cause of these delays at reliever airports is that they don't have the infrastructure necessary to keep things running smoothly.

For those without a reliever airport in their district, know that most of their funding comes from the Airport Improvement Program that we fund. The discretionary grants in that program are critical for these airports to fund the improvements necessary to provide smooth service to the rest of the industry.

Unfortunately, these tiny airports can't compete against their larger neighbors for these same resources. And the 2018 FAA Reauthorization recognized that. Which is why there is currently a set-aside for reliever airports in urban areas experiencing congestion. But talking to the reliever airports, you wouldn't know that program exists, because the set-aside for these critical institutions, is two thirds of 1% of discretionary funds.

That is why I am calling on the committee to triple the funding for these reliever airports in urban congested areas to 2%. By tripling the amount of money guaranteed to go to these critical facilities, we truly create a separate line item. We retain the competitive grant process, but ensure that reliever airports aren't just fighting over scraps, and forced to go against the big guys for any real money.

Though they may be small, they are mighty. Reliever airports are the essential lynch pin that allow planes to land and takeoff at the scheduled times in our larger airports. I urge the committee to increase the reliever airport set-aside so that families do not suffer from missed flights, missed connections, and missed opportunities.

While I bring these urgent needs to the committee, I do so recognizing that there are of course many other urgent priorities that my constituents, aviation stakeholders, and Americans across the country, hope to see in the 2023 Bill. As a Member of the House Agriculture Committee, I have to mention the importance of supporting Sustainable Aviation Fuels.

Not only is this a key priority identified by airports, airlines, and manufacturers alike, but it allows us to provide domestic, sustainable fuel. For those not immersed in commodity policy, SAF comes from the oil byproduct of soybeans grown right here in the US.

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In addition, we clearly need NEXT-GEN technology upgrades. We all experienced the confusion and loss that outdated technology can cause, which is why I hope the committee fully funds programs that upgrade outdated technology.

Finally let me say that none of this would be possible without the people on the ground and in the air actually doing the work day to day. I strongly urge the committee to work with workers to ensure that our aviation workers are supported in the 2023 FAA Reauthorization.

With all that said, I am happy to discuss any of this further, and just want to underscore the importance of investing in HBCUs, HSIs, and Reliever Airports.

Sincerely,

Jasmine Crockett

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Crockett'.

Member of Congress
Texas' 30th District