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Testimony before
House Aviation Subcommittee
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Vice President, FAA Managers Association, Inc.
Before the Subcommittee on Aviation
House Transportation and Infrastructure
Air Traffic Control Facility Staffing
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Chairman Costello, Ranking Member Petri and Members of the Subcommittee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify regarding Air Traffic Control Facility Staffing on behalf of the FAA Managers Association. I am the Vice President of the FAA Managers Association and currently serve in the FAA's Houston Air Route Traffic Control Center as the Traffic Management Officer. I am here on annual leave and my comments do not represent the views of the FAA.

The FAA Managers Association's mission is to promote excellence in public service, and in particular, represent the managers who ensure aviation safety and efficiency. Among those we represent are the front line managers who not only develop, train and oversee the nation's air traffic controllers, but also ensure safety and efficiency in the National Airspace System (NAS) and implement changes in the NAS, whether they be hardware, software, or procedural changes. It is critical that you know that to become a front line manager, each of our Air Traffic Front Line Managers must have first served successfully as an air traffic controller.

I believe the FAA Managers Association holds a unique perspective on air traffic control facility staffing since it is the first level of supervisors who manage and oversee the controller workforce. While we manage the day-to-day operation of our air traffic facilities, we are also charged with supervising the significant number of new controller hires, as well as providing oversight of the seamless integration of new technology (NextGen). We have the duty of trying to replenish our own workforce, partly due to retirements and partly due to cuts in years past, in order to provide sufficient oversight of our system. Additionally, with the increased demand on the system and NextGen on the horizon, supervisory oversight becomes critically important.

I would like to focus my comments on three key areas. First, I would like to address the new controllers that the FAA is hiring to fill record numbers of retirements. Second, I will address the need to increase the minimum number of supervisors within the FAA to improve and enhance safety in the system. Supervisor Staffing is even more important due to the diminishing levels of cumulative experience that we have in our controller workforce. It is important to note that we can soon expect to see higher rates of supervisory retirements that will compound the experience gap that already exists. Third, I want to provide you with my Association's views on how the current system is functioning.

It is undeniable that there is a need for additional controllers. However, it must be noted that with the hiring of new controllers, management and oversight is crucial. This is

not meant to be critical of the new controllers, but rather to emphasize that fact that proper supervision is essential to a safe aviation system, and we strongly believe that the best person to provide this oversight is a trained and dedicated Front Line Manager. Although there are naturally some exceptions, we have every reason to be optimistic about the new batch of air traffic controller recruits.

I have been hearing from our Managers across the United States, including Alaska, that the new recruits are eager and enthusiastic. They are up for the challenge of an accelerated and rigorous training program. The main difficulty we foresee is the fact that the abundance of trainees will cause a backlog of simulation time as they compete with other forms of recurrent and/or remedial training. Lack of Front Line Managers' oversight during training is a very big problem. Once training has been completed, oversight to these newly certified controllers is essential.

I was hired by the FAA in 1983 and had no previous air traffic control experience. At that time, there was no Collegiate Training Institute (CTI) hiring program and I did not have military experience. I was assigned to Little Rock Tower and Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON) in Little Rock, AR. After completing training at LIT Tower, my managers at the time told me that I was the youngest fully-certified tower controller in the FAA. Over the course of my career, I have worked at towers, TRACON's, and Centers in Little Rock, AR; Savannah, GA; Jacksonville, FL; Philadelphia, PA; and Houston, TX; as well as military, and research facilities in Atlantic City, NJ and Colorado Springs, CO. As I said before, I am now employed at Houston Center in Houston, TX.

The situation in 1981-1983 is eerily similar to today. In the early 1980's, the US was struggling with similar economic conditions as we are today. The difference between then and now is that in 1981, we had 2600 front line managers and fully staffed training and quality assurance departments in place to facilitate the training and certification of the brand new controller workforce. Today our supervisory staff is woefully understaffed and our training and QA staffs are still staffed at the reduced levels of the 1990's, as if no training dilemma even exists.

In many of our towers and TRACONs, we are hearing reports that training departments, with or without contractor personnel, are only now being fully supported. This concerns us, as it is our core belief that not only is it important to provide operational training oversight with a front line manager, but it is essential that all of our facilities have the means to provide classroom and simulation training without compromising the integrity of the program or depleting existing controller resources. This represents an area where the FAA could do better.

It has come to our attention that there are some currently in the workforce who are spreading tales of new hires who lack the talent and initiative needed to meet the rigors of such a demanding job. We believe these stories to be an unfortunate mischaracterization of our new recruits. In fact, a side-by-side comparison of the certification times of the new hires compared to the certification times of transferring controllers within the last 10 years may shed some light on the truth. A transferring controller is a controller who has been

previously certified in an ATC facility and is moving to another. When this happens, the controller is trained in the new facility in much the same way as a new hire. Even in this case, the transferring controller must demonstrate before a supervisor his/her ability to correctly perform the functions of an air traffic controller. In many cases, we are seeing today's new hires meet all the requirements to reach full certification in times far below that of some of our previous transferring controllers.

The enthusiasm of today's new recruits has enhanced the overall morale at a number of facilities. We appreciate their dedication and welcome them to our team. FAAMA Managers have seen numerous success stories with these new hires; such as, a VRA hire completing a two-and-a-half year training program within seven months, and a Collegiate Training Institute (CTI) student completed the same program in one year and two months. These new recruits have brought passion and a youthful energy back into a workforce that has been plagued by contractual disagreements and low morale. FAAMA is not naïve to the fact that this new workforce is "green" and that we have a long way to go. This is why our Organization is very concerned that a lack of sufficient oversight could lead them towards a path of failure.

As an Association, increasing the number of Air Traffic Front Line Managers has been and still remains our number one priority in pending the FAA Reauthorization legislation. In 1998, the Clinton Administration, as part of the Collective Bargaining Agreement with the air traffic controller union, agreed to fund controller pay increases by eliminating 700 first-level supervisor positions, or Front Line Managers as we call them today, at air traffic control facilities across the country. This significant slash in supervisors led to the lack of proper supervision at air traffic control facilities and has had a dramatic impact on safety as well as the working environments. Operational Errors and delays immediately increased as result of the reductions in Front Line Managers. As the following graph shows, clearly there is a link in the air traffic environment between the level of supervision and safety. Both the DOT Inspector General (DOT IG)¹ and the Government Accounting Office (GAO)² have agreed with this assessment. Additionally, Congress has time and again stressed the importance of maintaining vital supervisor position³. It was only when Congress stepped in and mandated increases in the supervisory workforce that the error rate leveled off and eventually began to decline.

Year	Operational Errors	Error Rate Per 100,000 Flights	Supervisor Staffing
1993	761	0.53	2300
1994	767	0.52	2300
1995	767	0.52	2300

¹ Testimony of Alexis M. Stefani, Principle Assistant Inspector General, U.S. Department of Transportation at June 15, 2004 hearing before the House Committee on Transportation, Titled: Addressing Controller Attrition: Opportunities and Challenges Facing the Federal Aviation Administration.

² GAO Report 02-591. Air Traffic Control: FAA needs to better prepare for impending wave of controller attrition (June 2002)

³ FY02 House Report to accompany H.R. 2299, the Department of Transportation Appropriations Bill; FY03 House Report to accompany the Department of Transportation Appropriations Bill; FY04 and FY05 Conference Report language to accompany the Department of Transportation Appropriations Bills.

1996	791	0.53	2300
1997	790	0.51	2300
1998	894	0.56	2060
1999	992	0.60	1967
2000	1138	0.69	1897
2001	1182	0.74	1726
2002	1042	0.66	1609
2003	1211	0.79	1556

*All numbers taken from FAA Administrator's Fact Books

According to our research, the minimum number of Front Line Managers needed to effectively supervise our air traffic control system is 2060. We arrived at this number by conducting a facility-by-facility audit based on our collective experience of what the appropriate level should be. Attached is the breakdown on Front Line Managers' numbers by air traffic facility. The FAA Managers Association has held firmly that numbers of Front Line Managers should not be based on a ratio to the number of controllers. We believe that the FAA should be provided the latitude to determine specific oversight requirements in individual facilities and should be able match those requirements with an appropriate allocation of supervisory resources. Again, FAAMA used its own resources to conduct a facility-by-facility assessment, based on needs from a field perspective, and determined the correct number to be 2060.

The job of a Front Line Manager is not characterized by how many people they supervise, nor should the number of Front Line Managers be determined by the number of people supervised. That is only a part of the equation. (The attached numbers marry all aspects of the job.) While there have been discussions in the past about ratios of supervisors to controllers, we believe that a rigidly fixed ratio system fails to recognize the operational significance of the supervisors' duties. These men and women are not office managers; they are operational managers leading in the day-to-day delivery of safety and efficiency services to our customers. We need the flexibility to responsibly manage our supervisory resources and be able to place more front line managers where we need them. Today, the system is stressed and we need to be able to use our resources in our facilities effectively to ensure that we maintain the level of safety and efficiency that the flying public demands.

Retirements are affecting us on all fronts...from the controller to the manager to the administrative support staff. As controllers retire, we loose our employment base for the most seasoned air traffic controllers to move up to supervisory positions, as well as losing qualified controllers to supervise. As is the case government-wide, many of our managers are becoming eligible for retirement. In a snap-shot, we are currently understaffed, we see upcoming retirements in our ranks, our employment pool of qualified applicants is diminishing with their own retirements, and those we are charged with supervising are new. Management oversight is more critical than ever before.

Finally, the Air Traffic Control System is remarkably the safest and most efficient system in the world. Our goal is to not only keep it that way, but also make it better. We welcome the new controller work force. Together, we can meet the challenges of today and

tomorrow. We applaud the introduction of "NextGen". These upgrades are essential to managing the Nation's airspace where new demands of higher fuel prices, unmanned air systems, climate change, and very light jets will all pose significant challenges. I have no doubt that we will meet them, but there has to be an across the board assessment of needs. I will also acknowledge that we cannot fix or address all of our future problems by merely addressing equipment, controllers and oversight. We need effective leadership at every level. We are encouraged by the leadership of the FAA's Chief Operating Officer for the ATO, Hank Krakowski, and trust that he will guide, structure, and facilitate the Air Traffic Organization to achieve it's objectives. We look forward to working with him.

I would like to again thank this Committee for inviting me to testify today. I am available for your questions.

Attachement 1

Type Fac Code	Facility ID	Facility Name	ATC Grade	Service Area	Sup #
7	ATL	ATLANTA ATCT	12	EASTERN	7
3	A80	NORTH GEORGIA TRACON	12	EASTERN	15
3	MIA	MIAMI INTL ATCT	12	EASTERN	12
3	CLT	CHARLOTTE ATCT	11	EASTERN	12
3	CVG	GREATER CINCINNATI INTL ATCT	11	EASTERN	12
3	MCO	ORLANDO INTL ATCT	11	EASTERN	12
3	TPA	TAMPA INTL ATCT	11	EASTERN	12
3	DAB	DAYTONA BEACH ATCT	10	EASTERN	12
3	MEM	MEMPHIS INTL ATCT	10	EASTERN	12
3	BNA	NASHVILLE METRO ATCT	9	EASTERN	7
3	JAX	JACKSONVILLE INTL ATCT	9	EASTERN	7
2	P31	PENSACOLA TRACON	9	EASTERN	7
3	PBI	PALM BEACH INTL ATCT	9	EASTERN	7
3	RDU	RALEIGH DURHAM ATCT	9	EASTERN	7
3	SDF	LOUISVILLE STANDIFORD ATCT	9	EASTERN	8
6	ZSU	SAN JUAN CERAP	9	EASTERN	9
3	BHM	BIRMINGHAM MUNICIPAL ATCT	8	EASTERN	4
3	CHS	CHARLESTON INTL ATCT	8	EASTERN	4
7	FLL	FORT LAUDERDALE ATCT	8	EASTERN	5
3	GSO	GREENSBORO ATCT	8	EASTERN	5
3	MOB	MOBILE ATCT	8	EASTERN	4
3	RSW	FORT MYERS ATCT	8	EASTERN	4
3	SAV	SAVANNAH INTL ATCT	8	EASTERN	4
7	SFB	CENTRAL FLORIDA REGIONAL ATCT	8	EASTERN	4
3	TYS	KNOXVILLE ATCT	8	EASTERN	4
3	CAE	COLUMBIA METRO ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	CHA	CHATTANOOGA ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	FAY	FAYETTEVILLE MUNI ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
7	FXE	FT. LAUDERDALE EXEC ATCT	7	EASTERN	2
3	GPT	GULFPORT BILOXI REG ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	GSP	GREER ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	HSV	HUNTSVILLE ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	ILM	WILMINGTON ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	JAN	JACKSON INTL ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	LEX	LEXINGTON ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
3	MGM	MONTGOMERY RAPCON	7	EASTERN	4
3	MYR	MYRTLE BEACH ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
2	NMM	MERIDIAN NAS RATCF	7	EASTERN	4
7	ORL	ORLANDO EXECUTIVE ATCT	7	EASTERN	3
7	PDK	DE KALB PEACHTREE ATCT	7	EASTERN	3
3	FLO	FLORENCE ATCT	6	EASTERN	3
3	AGS	AUGUSTA ATCT	6	EASTERN	3
3	AVL	ASHEVILLE ATCT	6	EASTERN	3
7	PIE	ST. PETERSBURG ATCT	7	EASTERN	3
7	SJU	SAN JUAN INTL ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
7	SRQ	SARASOTA ATCT	6	EASTERN	4
3	TLH	TALLAHASSEE ATCT	7	EASTERN	4
7	TMB	TAMIAMI ATCT	7	EASTERN	3

Type Fac Code	Facility ID	Facility Name	Sub Total		521
			ATC Grade	Service Area	Sup#
7	STL	ST. LOUIS/LAMBERT INTL ATCT	10	CENTRAL	5
2	T75	ST. LOUIS TRACON	10	CENTRAL	7
3	MCI	KANSAS CITY INTL ATCT	9	CENTRAL	7
3	ICT	WICHITA MIDCONTINENT ATCT	9	CENTRAL	5
3	DSM	DES MOINES MUNI ATCT	8	CENTRAL	4
2	R90	OMAHA TRACON	8	CENTRAL	4
3	SGF	SPRINGFIELD REGIONAL ATCT	8	CENTRAL	4
3	LNK	LINCOLN MUNICIPAL ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
7	OMA	OMAHA ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
3	CID	CEDAR RAPIDS MUNI ATCT	6	CENTRAL	2
7	SUS	SPIRIT OF ST. LOUIS ATCT	6	CENTRAL	2
3	ALO	WATERLOO MUNICIPAL ATCT	5	CENTRAL	2
7	MKC	KANSAS CITY DOWNTOWN ATCT	5	CENTRAL	2
3	SUX	SIOUX CITY ATCT	5	CENTRAL	2
2	D10	DALLAS/FORT WORTH TRACON	12	CENTRAL	18
7	DFW	DALLAS/FORT WORTH ATCT	12	CENTRAL	7
2	I90	HOUSTON TRACON	11	CENTRAL	9
7	IAH	Houston ATCT	11	CENTRAL	6
3	SAT	SAN ANTONIO ATCT	10	CENTRAL	7
3	ABQ	ALBUQUERQUE ATCT	9	CENTRAL	7
3	AUS	AUSTIN ATCT	9	CENTRAL	7
3	CRP	CORPUS CHRISTI ATCT	9	CENTRAL	7
7	DAL	DALLAS LOVE FIELD ATCT	8	CENTRAL	5
7	FTW	FORT WORTH MEACHAM ATCT	7	CENTRAL	2
3	LIT	LITTLE ROCK ATCT	9	CENTRAL	5
3	MSY	NEW ORLEANS MOISANT ATCT	9	CENTRAL	5
3	OKC	OKLAHOMA CITY ATCT	9	CENTRAL	5
3	TUL	TULSA INTL ATCT	9	CENTRAL	5
3	ELP	EL PASO INTL ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
3	FSM	FORT SMITH TRACAB	8	CENTRAL	3
7	HOU	WILLIAM P. HOBBY ATCT	8	CENTRAL	4
3	MAF	MIDLAND REGIONAL ATCT	8	CENTRAL	4
7	RVS	TULSA JONES ATCT	8	CENTRAL	3
3	ABI	ABILENE DYESS RAPCON	7	CENTRAL	4
3	ACT	WACO ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
7	ADS	ADDISON ATCT	7	CENTRAL	2
3	AMA	AMARILLO ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
3	BTR	BATON ROUGE METRO ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
7	DWH	HOUSTON HOOKS ATCT	7	CENTRAL	3
3	GGG	GREGG COUNTY TRACAB	7	CENTRAL	3
3	LBB	LUBBOCK ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
3	LFT	LAFAYETTE REGIONAL ATCT	7	CENTRAL	4
3	ROW	ROSWELL ATCT	7	CENTRAL	3
3	SHV	SHREVEPORT ATCT	7	CENTRAL	5
3	LCH	LAKE CHARLES TRACAB	6	CENTRAL	3
3	HUF	TERRE HAUTE ATCT	6	CENTRAL	3
3	FSD	SIOUX FALLS ATCT	6	CENTRAL	3
7	FNT	FLYING CLOUD	6	CENTRAL	2

3	FAR	FARGO	6	CENTRAL	3
3	EVV	EVANSVILLE ATCT	7	CENTRAL	3
3	DLH	DULUTH	6	CENTRAL	3
7	DPA	DUPAGE	7	CENTRAL	2
7	CPS	EAST ST. LOUIS	6	CENTRAL	2
3	BPT	JEFFERSON COUNTY ATCT	7	CENTRAL	3
3	BIS	BISMARCK TRACAB	5	CENTRAL	2
3	AZO	KALAMAZOO ATCT	7	CENTRAL	3
3	MFD	MANFIELD ATCT	5	CENTRAL	2
3	MBS	SAGINAW ATCT	6	CENTRAL	3
3	MKG	MUSKEGON	6	CENTRAL	3
3	C90	CHICAGO TRACON	12	CENTRAL	20
3	D21	DETROIT TRACON	11	CENTRAL	8
7	DTW	DETROIT ATCT	11	CENTRAL	5
3	M98	MINNEAPOLIS TRACON	11	CENTRAL	8
7	MSP	MINNEAPOLIS ATCT	11	CENTRAL	5
7	ORD	CHICAGO ATCT	12	CENTRAL	10
7	MDW	CHICAGO MIDWAY	8	CENTRAL	5
3	CLE	CLEVELND ATCT	10	CENTRAL	10
3	CMH	COLUMBUS ATCT	9	CENTRAL	7
3	DAY	DAYTON	9	CENTRAL	7
3	IND	INDIANAPOLIS ATCT	9	CENTRAL	7
3	MKE	MILWAUKEE ATCT	9	CENTRAL	7
			Sub Total		346
1	JNU	JUNEAU INTL ATCT	5	WESTERN	1
2	D01	DENVER TRACON	11	WESTERN	8
7	DEN	DENVER INTL ATCT	11	WESTERN	5
2	S46	SEATTLE TACOMA TRACON	11	WESTERN	7
2	S56	SALT LAKE CITY TRACON	10	WESTERN	7
7	SEA	SEATTLE TACOMA INTL ATCT	9	WESTERN	5
7	SLC	SALT LAKE CITY INTL ATCT	10	WESTERN	5
7	APA	CENTENNIAL ATCT	8	WESTERN	4
2	P80	PORTLAND TRACON	9	WESTERN	5
7	PDX	PORTLAND INTL ATCT	8	WESTERN	4
7	BFI	BOEING FIELD ATCT	8	WESTERN	3
3	BOI	BOISE ATCT	8	WESTERN	4
3	COS	COLORADO SPRINGS ATCT	8	WESTERN	4
3	GEG	SPOKANE INTL ATCT	8	WESTERN	4
3	BIL	BILLINGS INTL ATCT	7	WESTERN	4
3	EUG	EUGENE ATCT	7	WESTERN	4
7	LAX	LOS ANGELES INTL ATCT	11	WESTERN	8
9	NCT	N. CALIF TRACON	12	WESTERN	28
9	SCT	SO. CALIFORNIA TRACON	12	WESTERN	35
3	HNL	HONOLULU INTL ATCT	11	WESTERN	5
2	P50	PHOENIX TRACON	11	WESTERN	8
7	PHX	PHOENIX INTL ATCT	11	WESTERN	6
6	ZHN	HONOLULU CONTOL FACILITY	11	WESTERN	12
2	L30	Las Vegas TRACON	11	WESTERN	7
7	LAS	LAS VEGAS INTL ATCT	11	WESTERN	5
7	OAK	OAKLAND ATCT	9	WESTERN	5
7	SFO	SAN FRANCISCO INTL ATCT	10	WESTERN	5
7	LGB	LONG BEACH ATCT	8	WESTERN	4

8	ZOB	CLEVELAND CENTER	12	CENTRAL	56
6	ZUA	GUAM CERAP	8	WEST	5
6	ZJU	SAN JUAN CERAP	9	EAST	10
			Enroute Totals		936
			Combined Totals		2060