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Dear Chairman Graves and Ranking Member Larsen,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my priorities for FAA Reauthorization this year. I encourage the Committee to include provisions that help address aviation noise and emissions that impact many communities surrounding airports. As a member of Congress whose district is home to one of the busiest and fastest-growing airport hubs in the country, Sea-Tac International Airport, I know the importance of the aviation system for jobs and the economy. However, I have also seen first-hand the impacts of aviation noise and emissions on the environment, health, and quality of life of these communities.

I believe that we should treat the impact of aviation noise and emissions as environmental justice and health issues. The impact of noise and emissions disproportionately impacts low-income communities, communities of color, and vulnerable populations. These communities are often already facing greater risks and impacts from poor air quality and other environmental and health hazards. I continue to encourage the FAA to reevaluate its selection of noise measurement methodologies, health impact thresholds, and abatement program effectiveness and requiring them to consider the impact on human health and environment when determining airport capacity and approving new flight routes. The hope this FAA Reauthorization we can continue to push the FAA to do better in these areas.

Community engagement should be the centerpiece of our response to aviation noise and emissions. While meaningful changes were included in the FAA Reauthorization Act of 2018, many of these changes have not been implemented in a timely fashion or at all. And some of the changes that have been implemented, such as the FAA's Ombudsman Office, have not taken meaningful action in addressing constituent and community concerns. FAA engagement with community members has been woefully insufficient. I believe we can and must do more to ensure that the FAA's approach to community engagement on these issues is more robust, inclusive, and responsive to all community members.

I have recently reintroduced legislation that I first offered in the 115th Congress to improve the manner in which the FAA engages with noise-affected areas. The Aviation Impacted Communities Act seeks to help cities, localities, and neighborhoods to better and more productively engage with the FAA. The legislation is geared particularly towards communities that have not been recognized as "impacted" by the FAA's noise standard. It would require that the FAA interface directly with and be responsive to residents and locally nominated leaders on issues of aviation noise and environmental impacts. Through the creation of local community boards, affected areas will be empowered to more effectively work toward achieving relief from the impacts of civil and commercial aviation.

More work needs to be done to ensure greater access to the FAA's Airport Improvement Program (AIP) for noise insulation. Many airports have opted to use the AIP fund to pay for noise mitigation, however, there are many limits on the program, including barring the use of AIP funds on the same home or structure twice. This regulation prevents airports from ever replacing or repairing sound insulation if the products become defective or cause problems for the homeowner. Airports, including Sea-Tac, that started noise insulation projects in the 1980's and 1990's often did not have access to high quality materials, and in some cases, contractors installed sound insulation without proper ventilation or structural supports, causing structural damage, mold, and other problems. It is incredibly expensive for homeowners to replace or repair the sound insulation, especially for lower income homeowners, leaving many individuals and families with deteriorating or molded structures in their homes. I recently introduced the Sound Insulation Treatment Repair and Replacement Program Act with Senator Murray to help address this issue. It would establish a process by which airports may apply for additional AIP funding to repair or replace noise mitigation packages. I urge the inclusion of this bicameral legislation in the Reauthorization.

In addition to noise impacts from aviation, particulate matter, ultrafine particles (UFPs), and other pollutants pose an outsize threat to those living near airports and under flight pathways. UFP pollutants are miniscule particles of less than one hundred nanometers in size that are emitted as byproducts of petroleum fuel combustion in engines, such as those used on vehicles and aircraft. Studies have demonstrated that communities near airports and under airflight pathways are exposed to higher proportions of pollution and harmful particles from aviation emissions. This can lead to increased risks of breast cancer, heart disease, birth defects, asthma, and a variety of other lung and cardiovascular conditions that impact adults and children. These additional risks are on top of the many other environmental and health hazards disproportionately impacting low-income communities and communities of color.

I recently reintroduced the Protecting Airport Communities from Particle Emissions Act to address this issue. This legislation would require the FAA to work with the Environmental Protection Agency to conduct a national study of UFPs. With more extensive research, we will be able to properly regulate ultrafine particulate and help ensure that individuals and families living near aviation hubs are protected from the worst health implications of aviation emissions.

I believe a fundamental problem with our current response to aviation noise and emissions at the federal level is that it is almost entirely led by the FAA. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and Department of Health and Human Service (HHS) should play a much more active role in addressing this challenge as an environmental and health issue. That is why I strongly support the reestablishment of the EPA's Office of Noise Abatement and Control and additional actions by the EPA and HHS to increase their engagement in affected communities.

I recently worked with impacted community members and organizations in my district to introduce the Aviation Noise and Emissions Mitigation Act. This legislation creates two new pilot grant programs at the EPA, in coordination with the FAA and HHS, for hyperlocal studies of air quality and noise impacts and for mitigation programs in communities. The bill will help us to better understand the effects of noise and emissions and fund initiatives driven by impacted

communities to mitigate the effects on the environment, public health, and quality of life of residents.

As the aviation sector has grown, with more people flying more frequently, significant investments have been put toward airport infrastructure. We need to make similar investments in communities that feel the negative effects of aviation. This means not only investing in new technologies to reduce air travel emissions and expanding other forms of zero-emissions travel, but also directing funding to the communities disproportionately impacted by aviation. Residents living in aviation-impacted communities cannot wait any longer for relief from the public-health consequences of exposure to high concentrations of pollutants and high levels of aviation noise. Congress and the federal government must establish new programs to better measure the environmental and public-health consequences of exposure to high levels of noise and emissions and invest in resources to reduce those impacts on these communities. Millions of Americans who live near aviation hubs — like my constituents in the 9th District — deserve nothing less.

I appreciate your consideration of these requests and look forward to working with you on advancing an FAA reauthorization bill this year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Adam Smith". The signature is stylized and cursive.

Adam Smith  
Member of Congress