

Statement of Mr. Adam Woodworth, Chief Executive Officer, Wing Aviation, LLC

Before the Subcommittee on Aviation

Committee on Transportation and Infrastructure

2167 Rayburn House Office Building

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Introduction

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen, Subcommittee Chairman Graves, and Subcommittee Ranking Member Cohen, thank you for inviting me to offer my perspective on implementation of the landmark *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024*. I offer my testimony as Chief Executive Officer of Wing, a logistics company focused on package delivery by drone of retail goods, food items, and medical samples and supplies.

Across the industry, commercial drone operators like Wing prioritize safe integration of drones into the airspace while providing our partners, customers, and communities with safe, efficient and sustainable service. My testimony will offer a broad overview of where we have been, where we are going, and what you can do now to help support the continued growth of the American drone industry. We appreciate the proactive and bipartisan approach members of this committee have taken to address these important issues.

A year and a half ago, I testified about the need for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to take a predictable and pragmatic approach to drone integration and enable a regulatory framework that would allow us to fly by rule rather than by exception. Members of this committee recognized that American progress in drone policy had stalled and they acted in bipartisan fashion to provide oversight and craft sensible policy solutions to advance safe drone integration. I am thankful to Congress – and this Committee’s leadership in particular – for an FAA Reauthorization Act which includes numerous provisions that addressed the challenges I discussed. Your efforts worked, and we are now making real progress again in the United States.

Progress Since 2023

To the FAA’s credit, they began working to make progress to advance the United States’ drone industry in response to your oversight. For example, the FAA has streamlined the waiver process and has created a Criteria for Making Determinations (CMD) process. These improvements have enabled the agency to approve true beyond visual line of sight (BVLOS) operations utilizing our detect and avoid system without the need for visual observers, as well as more efficiently accept aircraft and aircraft software changes. This allows us to field the best version of our service, rolling out timely updates to aircraft hardware and software that improve accessibility and capabilities to our customers.

In North Texas, Wing and industry partners have initiated a UAS Traffic Management (UTM) governance structure overseen by the FAA that provides a framework to introduce strategic

coordination among professional BVLOS operators that is repeatable nationwide and has drawn significant interest from regulators around the world as a commonsense, lightweight approach to airspace integration. All this progress – and the value it has shown our partners and customers – has enabled Wing to continue to grow our services throughout the past year.

We have expanded Wing’s delivery service across the Dallas-Fort Worth (DFW) metropolitan area and currently operate from 16 partner locations, covering a population of more than 2 million people. We are operating with the country’s largest employer, Walmart, and the country’s largest food aggregator, DoorDash, every day – delivering tens of thousands of orders this year.

We have seen how drone delivery can improve the experience of customers day to day. And we have also seen the impact drone delivery can have when it matters most, when we conducted disaster assistance in North Carolina in partnership with Walmart after Hurricane Helene.

This progress has carried over outside the United States as well. Due in part to the demonstrated safety and readiness of our technology, we are now flying blood samples between the rooftops of two hospitals in the heart of London. And in Australia, we have opened service in Melbourne, furthering our progress in mature markets where regulation allows for scaled operations.

We have seen rapid progress across the industry over the last 18 months in the United States. During our own 2024 expansion, we have continued to see strong support from the communities we operate in and strong customer demand:

- We have averaged a 75 and above Net Promoter Score (NPS) in the DFW metro area compared with parcel delivery services receiving an average NPS of 21 per a recent Qualtrics XM Institute survey;¹
- In 2024 alone, we conducted over 40 community events in DFW, as well as nine Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) outreach events, and met with over 20 city councils and planning and zoning commissions.
- Most importantly we engaged with thousands of residents and feedback collected at local events and Walmart stores reflected an over 95 percent positive sentiment.

While doing this we've invested in continuing to build relationships with the communities we operate in and around. We have participated in general aviation's largest events, including EAA AirVenture and SUN 'n FUN airshows. Allowing aviators and the public to see what drone delivery actually looks like.

The progress of the last year has given us the confidence to invest more significantly in the US market. To maintain this momentum we have announced our intention to further expand into additional states, starting with North Carolina and then further into Florida.

Path Forward

The progress over the last year and a half has been transformative and I want to ask for this committee's and Congress' continued support and oversight as we move towards implementing

¹ Qualtrics XM Institute, *Economics of NPS in the Parcel Delivery Industry*, 2021, https://www.qualtrics.com/m/www.xminstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/XMinstitute_DataSnapshot_EconomicsOfNPS2020_ParcelDeliveryServices-1.pdf. For reference, a NPS above 20 is considered "favorable", and any NPS over 50 is considered "excellent" and represents a very high degree of consumer satisfaction.

the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024* over the coming year. We must ensure that the United States does not fall behind other competing countries in this new era of aviation. The good news is the Act provides the right blueprint for these reforms, and I want to draw your attention to six specific issues it addresses where Congress' oversight is critical:

- **First, the FAA must publish a notice of proposed rulemaking establishing a framework for BVLOS operations in the United States this year.** While we are encouraged the FAA has sent the proposed BVLOS rule to the White House, it is critical to complete the interagency process and publish the proposed rulemaking so that stakeholders can provide public comments on the draft rule and see how the FAA has interpreted the bipartisan direction of this committee and Congress;
- **Second, the FAA must work to streamline the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) process.** We can do this without compromising existing environmental standards.
 - While the FAA is making strides here, the progress is too slow. We must see a more programmatic and nationwide approach to NEPA as called for in the Act.
 - This is the longest lead item today when Wing wants to expand our service to a new area and often delays our service availability.
- **Third, we must consider pragmatic approaches to hazardous materials.** The FAA and the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration must follow the direction of this committee and provide a more sensible and pragmatic approach for small

drones to carry everyday items like thermometers, watch batteries, and certain “over the counter” medicines and goods such as hand sanitizer.

- The current aviation regulatory requirements are designed for large airplanes with people on board carrying large quantities of dangerous goods. We must address this burdensome regulation and enable a more sensible framework for uncrewed aircraft carrying small quantities of everyday items.
- **Fourth, the FAA should build on progress on waivers designed to streamline and improve rulemaking processes.** The FAA should implement Section 927 of the Act to continue to improve progress on waivers while we wait on the beyond visual line of sight rulemaking to be adjudicated in the rulemaking process. By implementing Section 927, applicants can have their ideas evaluated on the merits by the agency in a more streamlined fashion, helping the pace of acceptance keep up with the pace of demand and technological safety improvements.
- **Fifth, the FAA should designate Network Remote ID as a true *alternative* means of compliance for the Remote Identification Rule.** As the FAA furthers its rulemaking for BVLOS operations, it should adopt an alternative means of compliance – consistent with the ASTM F3411 standards – following the direction provided in Section 907 of the Act. This has been utilized in several FAA demonstrations and is being implemented in markets beyond the United States.

- **Sixth, the FAA must develop additional expertise on automation.** The FAA should consult with industry on Section 924 of the Act, which calls for the FAA to develop expertise on automation. Specifically, the FAA should identify FAA processes and regulations that need to change to accommodate the increasingly automated role of a remote operator of an unmanned aircraft system.

All of these steps are critical to ensuring the Act's implementation moves the industry forward and maintains and builds upon the progress we have made in recent years. Now is the time to keep that momentum going strong. Delays in implementing these proposals have a negative impact on American consumers and businesses.

Closing

To its credit and thanks to your work, the FAA has made significant strides forward over the past year and a half by improving and streamlining its interim approval processes. This has enabled the industry's continuing expansion towards nationwide scaled operations, but your oversight is critical to ensure that the FAA now cements these recent gains. The good news is the *FAA Reauthorization Act of 2024* provides the blueprint for all of this. Now we must move collectively and expeditiously to implement the vision that this committee and Congress articulated so that consumers and businesses can benefit from what this aviation sector has to offer.

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