

Testimony from Congressman Bill Johnson (OH-06)

House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee Member Day Hearing

April 18, 2023

Chairman Graves, Ranking Member Larsen and distinguished members of the House Transportation and Infrastructure Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify on my top priority for the 2023 Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization bill.

I understand that the purpose of the FAA Reauthorization is to reauthorize the FAA and its programs that are designed to provide steady funding for maintaining and improving airport infrastructure and aviation safety. That said, I bring to your attention a concern with the requirements for primary airport status, which is currently defined by the number of commercial passenger enplanements.

This definition does not consider other critical factors that can drastically increase the amount of air traffic received by an airport and the associated maintenance costs, particularly public airports that are used by the U.S. military.

I recently sponsored legislation – H.R. 2558 – that would amend the requirements for primary airport status to include public airports that are also used by a military air reserve station. This bill has bipartisan and bicameral support. While it contains just one small provision, H.R. 2558 would be greatly beneficial to airports that provide a critical service to our nation by supporting a military air reserve station in addition to serving commercial, cargo and general aviation air traffic, but may not otherwise meet the current criteria for commercial enplanements to receive the funding provided to primary airports.

Presently, there is just one airport that falls under this category, the Youngstown-Warren Regional Airport. This airport is located in Trumbull County, Ohio and, together with the Youngstown Air Reserve Station (YARS), serves as one of the largest employers in the Mahoning Valley region. Although this airport presently receives only a small amount of commercial air traffic, the runways are used every single day by general aviation, cargo and especially military aircraft performing training and critical national security operational missions.

The increased funding provided to primary airports would enable the airport to advance much-needed maintenance, including a runway resurfacing project, that would not only increase safety and operations for military and other categories of aviation, but would assist in their effort to attract additional commercial air opportunities. Additionally, should any of the other airports supporting an air reserve station – and there are only a handful of these air reserve stations located at public airports rather than a military base – fall below 10,000 annual commercial enplanements, this legislation would ensure that they would also maintain their primary airport status and associated funding.

These airports are economic drivers for their local communities while also performing an important role for America's national security and military readiness.

I strongly believe this essential military usage – that doesn't exist at most commercial airports – should enable the Youngstown-Warren airport, and any other airport supporting an air reserve station, to receive the funding that is so very critical for maintaining the airport for the unique aviation traffic that they serve.

The \$1 million annual maintenance and operations funding of a primary airport, versus the mere \$150,000 annually for non-primary airports, will drastically increase their ability to maintain the safety and infrastructure needs of American aviators, especially our essential military aviators.

Thank you again for the opportunity to testify. It is my hope to work with you to ensure that this year's FAA Reauthorization is designed to meet the maintenance and infrastructure funding needs of our nation's aviation sector, and I respectfully urge you to include the text of H.R. 2558 in the 2023 FAA Reauthorization bill.