February 24, 2021

The Honorable James Inhofe
United States Senate
205 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jerry Moran
United States Senate
521 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
United States Senate
154 Senate Russell Building
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Inhofe, Moran, and Murray:

On behalf of the American Association of Airport Executives (AAAE), the U.S. Contract Tower Association (USCTA), and the National Air Traffic Controllers Association (NATCA), we are writing to express our strong support for the Continuity for Operators with Necessary Training Required for ATC Contract Towers Act of 2021. The CONTRACT Act would provide an incentive for retired federal controllers to continue working as controllers at airports that participate in the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) Contract Tower Program.

AAAE, USCTA, and NATCA are deeply concerned about the workforce challenges that we face across the aviation industry. All three organizations are working together and with Congress and the administration to ensure that there are enough controllers to accommodate the increasing staffing needs we face at FAA air traffic control facilities and at the 257 airports that participate in the FAA's Contract Tower Program.

The CONTRACT Act would help by allowing controllers who retire from federal service to work as controllers at smaller contract tower airports without their federal annuity supplement being reduced or eliminated entirely. Making this simple fix would provide a much-needed financial incentive for retired federal controllers to continue working as controllers at contract tower airports.

Over the years, contract tower airports have benefited from the experience, expertise and leadership of retired federal air traffic controllers who have gone on to serve at contract towers. They continue to be an integral part of the Contract Tower Program and its ability to provide air traffic control services that enhance aviation safety at airports around the country.

We should do everything we can to make it easier for controllers who retire from the federal government to continue working at contract towers airports. Allowing retired federal controllers to keep their federal annuity while serving at contract tower airports would remove an unnecessary roadblock at a time when we are facing increasing staffing challenges in the Federal Contract Tower Program.

As you know, there is a precedent for allowing certain retired federal controllers to keep their full federal annuity, including the annuity supplement even when they continue to work after retirement. Several years ago, Congress overwhelmingly passed bipartisan legislation to allow retired FAA controllers to be employed as full-time air traffic control instructors under contract with the FAA without losing their annuity. The CONTRACT Act would simply expand that provision to include those retired federal controllers who work at contract tower airports.

Thank you for reintroducing the CONTRACT Act in the 117th Congress. We strongly support your common sense approach and look forward to working with you on other ways to address our workforce challenges.

Sincerely,

Bradley P. Van Dam
Executive Director
U.S. Contract Tower Association
Senior Vice President, Government Affairs
American Association of Airport Executives

Paul Rinaldi
President
National Air Traffic Controllers Association