



Testimony by Sarah Jane Oberman Bartush, CMO  
Channel Islands Aviation, Inc.  
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Chairman Knight, Ranking Member Murphy, and the other esteemed members of Congress here today, good morning. It is an honor to be here today. My name is Sarah Oberman Bartush and I'm from Camarillo, California. I'm second generation to my family's business, Channel Islands Aviation, which has been serving the general aviation industry since 1976. My parents Mark and Janie Oberman founded our business 42 years ago, and I, along with my brother Mike Oberman, were raised in aviation.

Our family owned business is unique, Channel Islands Aviation is a Part 141 Pilot School, Part 141 Repair Station and under our DBA CI Jets, a Part 135 charter operator. We have been deeply impacted by the ongoing workforce shortages.

I first want to share how this epidemic is creating a hardship in our flight school. Right now, we have one hundred and fifteen active students with a training staff consisting of only seven full time and three part-time flight instructors. We barely have enough instructors on staff to accommodate our existing student base but the other problem is that we have 13 customers waiting to start their training because we don't have enough instructors to meet their demand. We have lost 19 instructors to regional airlines in the past 3 years, 3 of which so far this year.

Another issue we are facing as a result of the pilot shortage in our flight school is the fact that becoming a flight instructor is no longer a necessary step in a professional pilot's career. Commercial pilots fresh out of school with as little as 200 hours of flight time are stepping into jobs flying skydivers, performing aerial mapping and in many cases they're hired as co-pilots with charter operators. Just last week I received an email from a charter operator based at Camarillo airport, where we are based, saying they have six pilot openings and that they'd like to

hire fresh graduates from our flight school! Pilots are always looking to fly something bigger and faster, so when given the option of flying as a co-pilot in a jet or teaching at their local flight school upon graduation, the decision is obvious – to fly the jet of course!

The poaching of flight school flight instructors creates an obvious problem; eventually I may have no flight instructors to teach new pilots. If that happens Channel Islands Aviation, who has taught countless pilots to fly over 42 years, will have no choice but to close our flight school.

Flight instructors aren't the only talent we're lacking in running a successful flight school. Recently we have been challenged in hiring and retaining aircraft mechanics in our Part 145 Repair Station. This year there have been multiple instances where we've cancelled flight lessons as a result of not having the man power to work on our training fleet. This is a new problem for us and one that needs a solution. Not only have we been faced with challenge of maintaining our own fleet but we've been forced to turn away customers who have brought their aircraft to us for maintenance for years. In order for us to continue to be successful in creating pilots, we need more mechanics to service our planes.

The situation with CI Jets is just as dire. We currently operate four jets and employ seven full time pilots. As a boutique charter operator, we are deeply impacted by the hiring vacuum of the major airlines due to the pilot shortage. In the past, professional pilots have either chosen to fly corporate or have chosen to go to the airlines and once a pilot has made that commitment, he or she historically sticks to that path their entire career. Nowadays, the compensation packages and retirement benefits offered by the airlines are luring corporate pilots into making a career change to fly for the airlines.

In the past year, we have had two senior pilots, each making \$200,000 per year flying a twenty million dollar airplane to exotic destinations all over the world, give us letters of resignation because they planned to fly for the major airlines. Each time we've had to hire to replace them, we've received fewer and fewer resumes from less qualified candidates, all demanding higher pay than the last. The pilot shortage is forcing charter operators to pay record salaries yet we have not been able to charge more for our services.

Pilot turnover significantly impacts our business as the hiring process itself is time consuming, it's costly to train new pilots (anywhere from \$10,000 to \$60,000 per training event) and the opportunity cost of having an aircraft grounded due to not having crew is detrimental to our business. In the past year alone we've been forced to hire four pilots due to others leaving for the major airlines.

There may never be a better time to become a commercial pilot and pursue a career in aviation. The forecasted demand for pilots is astounding. The pilot shortage has only just begun, and it is already creating great hardship on small businesses like mine. The airlines are huge companies and they have deep pockets. They are offering sign-on bonuses, lucrative salaries, and incredible benefits that my family's small business will never be able to compete with. If the industry turns all of its flight instructors into high paid pilots and flight schools across the nation will go out of business and there will be no one left to teach new pilots how to fly. If charter operators are unable to retain pilots, all of the businesses that rely on private jets as a means of transportation to conduct business will suffer and pilots will not be able to gain the experience and flight time that they need to safely work for the major carriers. Something must be done to bring light to this situation and to encourage the airlines to work with both the charter operators and flight schools rather than just constantly swooping up their talent. Thank you again for having me here today and bringing this issue the time that it deserves.