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PERMANENT SUBCOMMITTEE ON INVESTIGATIONS

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Chair Blumenthal, Ranking Member Johnson, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to be here with you today to discuss the FAA's oversight of Boeing's production and manufacturing system and the agency's whistleblower programs.

I would like to begin by reiterating that the number one priority for the FAA is the safety of the flying public. As we carry out our regulatory responsibilities and oversight activities, safety will always inform our decision-making, and I am prepared to use the full range of my authority to ensure accountability whether from a manufacturer, an air carrier, or the FAA's own operations.

FAA Whistleblower Program

I want to start off by stressing the importance of our Whistleblower and Safety Hotline programs. The safety and integrity of our air transportation system relies heavily on having a culture where people come forward with their safety concerns without fear of reprisal, and they have confidence in the process to know that their report will be investigated thoroughly. It is a priority for me to have a strong whistleblower program at the FAA. I want to thank the many individuals who have already reached out to our Office of Audit and Evaluation, and I strongly encourage anyone with safety concerns to report them to the FAA's Hotline at hotline.faa.gov. We thoroughly evaluate every report we receive.

In addition to having our hotline program available to employees, Boeing must maintain its own robust safety reporting programs and promote a safe and proactive reporting culture within its organizations. The FAA will continue to closely monitor Boeing's implementation of the

Aviation Safety Action Program (ASAP) and the maturity of its Speak-up program as part of our oversight.

FAA Safety Oversight and Boeing Issues

Boeing's manufacturing and production system is complex and multi-faceted, spanning multiple facilities and thousands of suppliers. Because of the complexity of its operations, Boeing must have a robust safety system comprising of multiple layers that can detect and mitigate identified risks. The FAA will hold Boeing accountable for having an effective system in place with procedures that ensure the production and delivery of safe airplanes.

787 Shimming Issues

Following reports of shimming-related discrepancies, in 2019 the FAA required Boeing to conduct a system-wide assessment of its shimming practices. During this assessment, Boeing stopped production and reinspected airplanes within its production system. FAA regulations required Boeing to evaluate the issue and implement immediate corrective actions within the production system to ensure only conforming products were built after the point of discovery. The FAA oversaw Boeing's implementation of the corrective actions, which included adding additional shim training requirements for mechanics and quality personnel, improving the workforce skillsets, and incorporating lessons learned and best practices for shimming into its production planning. The FAA also increased its surveillance of Boeing's shimming and gap management activities and retained our authority to issue airworthiness certificates for new 787 airplanes.

Extensive evaluations of the non-conforming joins showed that their strength significantly exceeded the load limits requirements and that there were no immediate safety of flight concerns.

In 2021 and 2022, the FAA also issued two airworthiness directives to require repetitive inspections to ensure any damage accumulated over time does not create a safety issue. The FAA will continue to monitor the long-term safety of the in-service fleet by requiring inspections to be performed over the life of the aircraft.

Alaska Airlines Flight 1282

On January 5, shortly after departure, Alaska Airlines Flight 1282 experienced rapid depressurization after the left mid-exit door plug blew out of a Boeing 737-9 MAX. Immediately following the accident, on January 6, the FAA issued an emergency airworthiness directive grounding all 737-9 MAX airplanes with that particular door plug configuration.

We mandated and oversaw a thorough inspection and maintenance process on each of the grounded airplanes before allowing them to return to service. Our findings during those inspections revealed that the quality system issues at Boeing were unacceptable and required further scrutiny. We increased oversight activities including:

- Capping production of new Boeing 737 MAX airplanes to achieve system stability and compliance with required quality control procedures.
- Launching an investigation scrutinizing Boeing's compliance with manufacturing requirements.
- Increasing oversight of the production of new airplanes with more FAA safety inspectors on-site at all Boeing manufacturing facilities.
- Increasing data monitoring to identify significant safety issues.
- Commissioning an independent analysis of potential safety-focused reforms around quality control and delegation.

Boeing Comprehensive Plan

This past February, I directed Boeing to develop a comprehensive action plan within 90 days to address its systemic quality control and production issues. During the subsequent months, the FAA worked closely with Boeing as it developed its roadmap and plan for the path forward. I required this plan to address the findings from the FAA's special audit as well as the recommendations from the expert review panel report required by Section 103 of the Aircraft Certification, Safety, and Accountability Act of 2020 (ACSAA). Boeing provided its plan to the FAA on May 30, 2024, marking the beginning of the next chapter of ensuring implementation and a renewed focus on safety at Boeing.

However, this plan does not mark the end of the FAA's increased oversight of Boeing and its suppliers. There must be a shift in the company's safety culture to holistically address its systemic quality assurance and production issues. Our goal is to make sure Boeing implements the necessary changes and has the right tools in place to sustain those changes in the long term.

In April of this year, we issued regulations that require Boeing to have a Safety Management System, which will ensure a structured, repeatable, systematic approach to identifying hazards and managing risk.

As part of its comprehensive plan, Boeing has committed to the following:

- Increasing and enhancing employee training, engagement, and communication;
- Encouraging their employees to speak up without fear of reprisal;
- Boosting supplier oversight;
- Increasing quality oversight at every step of the production process, and ensuring things happen in the right sequence and are approved before moving forward;

- Getting more input from users of the system;
- Simplifying production processes and procedures; and
- Bringing state-of-the-art technology to Boeing tool and parts management.

To monitor the health of Boeing's production and quality system, we also directed Boeing to identify key performance indicators (KPIs). These KPIs directly correspond to the targets outlined in its comprehensive action plan to improve its safety and quality systems and will help assess the effectiveness of its proposed initiatives. The KPIs provide real-time visibility into the production system with specific control limits that will trigger corrective action if needed.

FAA's Oversight Activities

As a result of systemic production quality issues, Boeing must make significant changes to transform its quality system and ensure the right layers of safety are in place. I am directly engaged to ensure Boeing executes the necessary changes to transform its safety culture and address its production quality issues. I met with their new CEO, Kelly Ortberg, last month and reemphasized to him our expectations that these changes must be sustained in the long term. We will also remain engaged with the Department of Justice (DOJ) to expeditiously provide notice, in real-time, of any activities that may be criminal so that DOJ can take any action they deem appropriate.

We have added more safety inspectors in the Boeing and Spirit AeroSystems facilities, and we will maintain our increased on-site presence for the foreseeable future. Our surveillance activities include:

- More engagement with company employees to hear directly from them and gauge the effectiveness of changes outlined in Boeing's plan;
- Added inspections at critical points of the production process; and
- Increased auditing of quality systems, build processes, and changes outlined in Boeing's plan.

Our safety inspectors are also monitoring each of Boeing's sub-teams tasked with implementing the key areas of the plan. Our safety inspectors are providing direct feedback on Boeing's proposed changes and monitoring the KPIs to identify potential system risks. The FAA is closely reviewing the KPIs to monitor Boeing's production system health and will independently assess any early indicators of risks within the system.

In addition to the work the safety inspectors are doing, we also have hundreds of other personnel who are focused on our oversight of Boeing. These employees are monitoring the in-service fleet through our continued operational safety processes, overseeing Boeing's Organization Designation Authorization, and conducting certification activities.

Addressing these safety issues also requires that the FAA continually examine the effectiveness of its own oversight processes and make the necessary improvements. We must continue to be increasingly proactive and establish more dynamic oversight protocols that allow us to anticipate and identify risks before they manifest themselves as events. As our first step, we are reevaluating our current safety management programs and other internal safety oversight initiatives.

As the FAA enhances our oversight models agency-wide, we are also examining opportunities to leverage the vast internal and external data resources to become more predictive in identifying risks across the aviation system. To this end, the agency is taking a fresh look at our current capabilities to provide more real time insight into any emerging safety trends and to share relevant data across the various components of our safety ecosystem.

Thank you again for the opportunity to be here today. I look forward to your questions.