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June 18, 2018

**The Honorable John Thune**

Chairman  
Senate Commerce Committee  
512 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

**The Honorable Bill Nelson**

Ranking Member  
Senate Commerce Committee  
512 Dirksen Senate Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Thune and Ranking Member Nelson:

Fifty years after the Concorde's maiden flight, the ingenuity of American innovators and entrepreneurs means the next generation of commercial supersonic transportation is right around the corner. We, the undersigned, support the return of supersonic transport in the strongest terms, and as a form of transportation that will be far more accessible to ordinary people than the Concorde ever was. We urge you to ensure it remains a key priority of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) Reauthorization Act of 2018.

This FAA Reauthorization will be the first time Congress has legislated on the issue of supersonic transportation since 1968. The 1973 rulemaking on civil supersonic flights overland that followed<sup>1</sup> inadvertently stymied research and development into supersonic passenger jets in general, and "low boom"

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<sup>1</sup> 14 C.F.R. § 91.817 (2018) ("No person may operate a civil aircraft in the United States at a true flight Mach number greater than 1...").

designs in particular. This regulation set back private sector aerospace innovation substantially.<sup>2</sup> Fortunately, R&D has continued despite the ban, and recent technological breakthroughs in manufacturing and computer design have enabled several American companies to make significant progress towards the goal of introducing affordable supersonic passenger flights. Additional advancements in materials science, aerospace design, and noise abatement technologies have also made it possible to substantially mitigate the noise created by sonic booms — so much so that to a person on the ground, an overhead sonic boom could one day soon “sound about as loud as a lawn mower or motorcycle, and only last about half a second.”<sup>3</sup>

Now is the ideal time for Congress to repeal the ban on operating civil supersonic aircraft in the United States, and direct the FAA to develop a sonic boom noise standard that is, in the words of the amendment put forward by Senator Mike Lee (R-UT) and Senator Cory Gardner (R-CO), “economically reasonable and technologically practicable.” Doing so would provide the investment certainty American entrepreneurs need to unleash a renaissance in commercial aviation innovation, create thousands of American manufacturing jobs, and strengthen the United States’ position as a global technological leader.

Respectfully,

Samuel Hammond  
Poverty and Welfare Policy Analyst  
Niskanen Center

Information Technology and Innovation Foundation  
  
Committee for Justice

Ryan Hagemann  
Senior Director for Policy  
Niskanen Center

TechFreedom  
  
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Gregory S. McNeal, JD/PhD  
Professor of Law & Public Policy  
Pepperdine University

R Street Institute

CC: Sen. Roger Wicker, Sen. Roy Blunt, Sen. Ted Cruz, Sen. Deb Fischer, Sen. Jerry Moran, Sen. Dan Sullivan, Sen. Dean Heller, Sen. James Inhofe, Sen. Ron Johnson, Sen. Shelley Moore Capito, Sen. Cory Gardner, Sen. Todd Young.

CC: Sen. Maria Cantwell, Sen. Amy Klobuchar, Sen. Richard Blumenthal, Sen. Brian Schatz, Sen. Ed Markey, Sen. Tom Udall, Sen. Gary Peters, Sen. Tammy Baldwin, Sen. Tammy Duckworth, Sen. Maggie Hassan, Sen. Catherine Cortez Masto, Sen. Jon Tester.

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<sup>2</sup> Eli Dourado and Samuel Hammond, *Make America Boom Again: How to Bring Back Supersonic Transport*, Mercatus Center at George Mason University, research paper, Oct. 2016, <https://www.mercatus.org/system/files/mercatus-dourado-supersonic-transport-v1.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.supersonicmyths.com/>.