

Support for HB1612: Enhancing Pilots' Mental Health Research

Dear Members of the Legislative Assembly,

I am writing to express my strong support for HB1612, a bill that seeks to establish funding for medical research into pilots' mental health, with the facility to be set up at the University of North Dakota's Center for Aerospace Sciences.

As a seasoned airline executive with over 30 years of experience and an alumnus of the University of North Dakota (UND), I have witnessed firsthand the challenges that pilots face in maintaining their first-class medical certifications during various life events. The loss of this certification often means the end of a pilot's career, a reality that underscores the urgent need for comprehensive mental health support in this field.

It is imperative that UND, a leader in aerospace education, spearheads the development of a research-based medical approach to help young men and women develop the necessary tools to navigate these challenges. Proper medical research is crucial in equipping pilots with strategies to maintain their mental health and ensure their continued certification and career longevity.

Furthermore, it is vitally important that these tools and strategies are also developed for pilots already well into their careers. By doing so, we can ensure that our airline systems remain the safest in the world, backed by pilots who are supported both physically and mentally.

UND's Center for Aerospace Sciences is uniquely positioned to lead this initiative, given its expertise and resources. The establishment of a dedicated facility for pilot mental health research will not only benefit individual pilots but will also enhance the overall safety and reliability of our airline industry.

I urge you to support HB1612 and the vital work it aims to accomplish. Your backing will make a significant difference in promoting mental health research for pilots and ensuring the continued excellence and safety of our airline systems.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

James (Jack) Muhs

SVP Aviation Safety and Technology at FedEx Express (Retired)