

United States Senate

February 25, 2020

Honorable Robert L. Sumwalt
Chairman
National Transportation Safety Board
490 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20594

Dear Chairman Sumwalt,

I write to request the support of the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) in improving air safety in Hawaii. On Saturday, February 22, two people died in a small plane crash northwest of Honolulu. The crash is the most recent in an increasing trend of deadly crashes in Hawaii. In December, seven people died when an air tour helicopter crashed on Kauai Island. In June, 11 people died when a skydiving plane crashed. In April, three more people lost their lives when a helicopter crashed in Kailua. Last year represented the deadliest year in Hawaii aviation in 28 years. When combined with recent whistleblower complaints against the Federal Aviation Administration, the incidents reveal a disturbing trend of ineffective oversight and insufficient safety regulations.

I ask that the NTSB convene a roundtable discussion on the Hawaii air tour industry and the future of safety regulations. The NTSB is well positioned to convene a group of independent safety experts, industry representatives, and community groups to have a frank discussion on what more can be done to keep Hawaii residents and visitors safe. I further ask that the discussion include a range of views and be open to the public. The NTSB has adeptly managed similar past events and I have no doubt that the Board can hold an effective conversation and yield ideas for necessary reforms.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this issue and your continued work to advance safety principles.

Sincerely,


BRIAN SCHATZ
United States Senator