

Aviation Workforce Development Act—H.R. 1818

Many regional airlines are suggesting there is a pilot shortage in the United States. The data, however, indicates there are currently more pilots than jobs available. ***In fact, there are currently about 1.5 certificated pilots relative to demand,*** according to Federal Aviation Administration and Bureau of Labor Statistics data.

But there are a shortage of financial pathways and incentives for young persons to pursue careers in aviation. Industry is responding through outreach programs and financial assistance to provide a more certain career pathway for people willing to invest in an aviation career. Pilot Associations are reaching out to communities to raise awareness of aviation career opportunities and with programs to actively mentor youth. However, elected representatives can do more by passing H.R. 1818, the “Aviation Workforce Development Act.” This bill expands the qualified tuition program, commonly referred to as 529(c) plan, to allow distributions to pay education-related expenses required for participation in certain aviation maintenance and commercial pilot courses.

The Allied Pilots Association has been advocating in Washington D.C. for ways to improve access to financial assistance programs for those who pursue an airline pilot career. H.R. 1818 would add an amendment to Section 529(c) of the IRS Code of 1986 stating that a ***qualified aviation maintenance and/or commercial pilot course*** would qualify as a “higher education expense” to enable 529 funds to be used to cover expenses for tuition, fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for that course. Specifically, the bill would allow 529 plans to be used for beneficiaries who seek to attend pilot training schools approved under part 61 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations, or that hold a pilot school certificate under part 141 of title 14, Code of Federal Regulations.

APA Government Affairs Committee members are working with the sponsors of the Bill to increase support to achieve passage and enactment into law.

H.R. 1818 was introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives on March 28, 2023. As of October 16, 2024, H.R. 1818 has bipartisan support with a total co-sponsorship of 162 members, split between 111 Republicans and 51 Democrats.

For questions or additional information please email GAC-Chairman@alliedpilots.org