

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3303

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Lucille Roybal-Allard
Chairman
Committee on Appropriations
Homeland Security Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Chuck Fleischmann
Ranking Member
Committee on Appropriations
Homeland Security Subcommittee
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Roybal-Allard and Ranking Member Fleischmann:

As you begin to craft the Fiscal Year 2021 Appropriations Act, I write to respectfully request that \$25 million and report language be included in the United State Coast Guard's (USCG) Procurement, Construction and Improvements (PC&I) account, for the resurfacing of Runway 1-19 at Base Elizabeth City, NC, which is included on the Coast Guard's Unfunded Priorities List.

As you know, the USCG's mission is to ensure our nation's maritime safety, security and stewardship. Base Elizabeth City plays a critical role in executing this mission, as it is home to one of the largest and busiest USCG air stations in the United States. In serving our nation by assisting with search and rescue, Maritime Law enforcement, and International Ice Patrol—Base Elizabeth City has embarked on East Coast airborne operations as far away as the Caribbean, the Azores, and Greenland. To maintain a USCG base of this stature, adequate funding for infrastructure is essential. Without it – antiquated and obsolete facilities could impede efforts to complete missions and ultimately make it harder to defend the nation.

Base Elizabeth City is currently faced with an infrastructure challenge – the absence of a functioning secondary runway to service flight operations during crosswind weather conditions. Runway 1-19 was designed for dangerous crosswinds, but due to safety concerns related to failed surface pavements, it was completely taken out of service by the USCG in 2015. Base Elizabeth City personnel prefer the option of a crosswind runway, as do local officials at Elizabeth City Regional Airport (KECG)—which operates under the oversight of Base Elizabeth City and shares land with the USCG. With only one runway (10-28) in use, KECG is also without a secondary option when faced with severe crosswinds.

With the exception of a few large planes that can handle the strong crosswinds, most aircraft cannot – especially when surface crosswind velocity exceeds 40 mph, which is not uncommon. During such wind conditions, even the Coast Guard's C-130s could benefit from having operational access to Runway 1-19.

Overall, the current situation poses significant safety concerns. A crosswind accident with aircraft damage and injury, whether civilian or military, would have a devastating impact on the utility and future of the KECG regional airport, as well as Elizabeth City State University (ECSU), whose faculty and students utilize the airport for its pilot training programs. Currently, due to safety concerns, ECSU flight instructors have to take their students to other airports with more wind-favored runways. ECSU, which is one of North Carolina's most prized Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), has the only four-year pilot training program in the state and is one of only three on the entire eastern seaboard. ECSU's flight training program has grown by over approximately 48% in the last two years. The university cannot continue to enroll and grow its flight training program without the additional runway.

With \$25 million in funding for Fiscal Year 2021, the USCG will be able to resurface and reopen Runway 1-19, which has not been updated since 1965. When a functioning crosswind runway is made available for KECG and the USCG, there will finally be an operational backup plan for aircraft that cannot use Runway 10-28 to land.

I urge your support of funding for resurfacing Runway 1-19 at the Elizabeth City Regional Airport, which will enhance safety and operational readiness at the Coast Guard Air Station Elizabeth City and mutually benefit the local airport authority, as well as student pilots at Elizabeth City State University.

In addition to the funding request, we also ask consideration of the following report language:

The Committee acknowledges that Elizabeth City Coast Guard Air Station is a critical facility to support search and rescue and disaster relief efforts along the Virginia and North Carolina coasts. Further, the Committee recognizes the Nation's need for pilot training programs at U.S. institutions of higher learning to address current and projected shortfalls, as well as Congress' commitment to diversity in aviation-related fields. Therefore, the Committee encourages the Coast Guard to partner with and support these training programs, particularly in underserved areas where air facilities are shared. The Coast Guard shall engage with local governments and institutions of higher learning to develop a plan to reactivate Runway 1-19 to better meet immediate operational requirements and support long term contributions to our Nation's pilot shortfall. The Committee recommends \$25,000,000 above the request for this initiative and directs the Coast Guard to work with State and local partners to complete this project.

Again, thank you for your consideration of these requests.

Sincerely,



Gregory F. Murphy, M.D. (NC-3)
Member of Congress