

June 16, 2026

The Honorable Bryan Bedford
Administrator
Federal Aviation Administration
800 Independence Avenue SW
Washington, D.C. 20591

Dear Administrator Bedford,

We write to you with grave concern about the role private equity (PE) may be playing in the aviation maintenance sector, ultimately leading to increased consumer costs and potential safety concerns.

The future of our aviation industry depends on talented workers having access to Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)-approved Aviation Maintenance Technician Schools (AMTS). Recognizing the critical role aviation mechanics play in maintaining the nation's aviation system, the PE industry has increasingly targeted FAA-aviation maintenance schools as investment opportunities. PE acquisitions of AMTS follow a common, often problematic PE strategy: acquire a training institution, expand its valuation through consolidations, and ultimately exit through a sale to a larger corporate platform.

For example, MIAT College of Technology, a major aviation mechanic training school in the Midwest, was historically backed by PE firm HCP & Company before being sold in 2021 to Universal Technical Institute (UTI), a publicly traded company.¹ Likewise, Aviation Institute of Maintenance (AIM), the nation's largest network of FAA-certified AMTS programs, which trains more than 20 percent of domestic aircraft maintenance students, has received backing from PE and investment groups, including a \$50 million investment from Ohana Capital Partners in 2024.² In addition, PE firm Sterling Partners acquired Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology—one of the nation's largest AMTS programs—in 2013 and has continued expanding its footprint through acquisitions and consolidations in recent years.³ This trend is apparent across the industry: in 2019, AIM acquired the historic Teterboro School of Aeronautics, which

¹ Faegre Drinker, "HCP & Co. Sells MIAT College of Technology to Universal Technical Institute Inc.," November 2021, <https://www.faegredrinker.com/en/services/experience/2021/11/hcp-co-sells-miat-college-of-technology-to-universal-technical-institute-inc>

² Pitchbook, "Aviation Institute of Maintenance Overview," accessed May 14, 2026, <https://pitchbook.com/profiles/company/531040-96#faqs>; Pitchbook, "Ohana Capital Partners Overview," accessed May 15, 2026, <https://pitchbook.com/profiles/investor/529006-33#overview>

³ Sterling Partners, "Spartan College of Aeronautics and Technology," accessed May 14, 2026, <https://sterlingpartners.com/company/spartan-college-aeronautics-technology/>

was considered the nation's oldest aircraft maintenance school, and in 2025, UTI engaged in consolidation across its Houston campuses.⁴

As we have seen in other industries, PE acquisitions and consolidations in technical training spaces often lead to aggressive cost-cutting and price increases that are borne by students, workers, and ultimately consumers. The same detrimental strategies appear to be increasing the cost of attending PE-owned AMTS. Tuition at an FAA-certified public AMTS costs, on average, between \$5,000 and \$15,000, but tuition at an FAA-certified *private* AMTS costs between \$30,000 and \$50,000 for obtaining the same FAA certifications.⁵ These higher tuition costs can force many students into greater debt burdens and discourage others from pursuing careers in aviation maintenance altogether. These obstacles likely contribute to the one-third of aviation maintenance training seats that reportedly remain unfilled despite extraordinary labor demand.⁶

PE's impact on the aviation mechanic workforce extends beyond AMTS programs and into the broader Maintenance, Repair, and Overhaul (MRO) sector. MROs provide critical "on-the-ground" training and employment opportunities for aviation mechanics, including pathways for aspiring mechanics who do not attend an AMTS and instead opt to complete months of practical training. According to a recent PitchBook report tracking investment activity, PE investors have flooded the aviation MRO industry over the last five years, driving a record number of deals.⁷ From 2024 to 2025, there were at least 65 mergers and acquisitions in the MRO aviation sector, primarily driven by PE.⁸ In fact, in the first half of 2025, PE-led deals made up nearly 20 percent of all mergers and acquisitions activity in the aviation MRO sector.⁹ The trend has continued in 2026: On May 5, 2026, GenNx360 Capital Partners, a New York-based PE firm, announced the sale of its portfolio company, Precision Aviation Group, Inc., a major MRO services business, to VSE Corporation for \$2 billion.¹⁰

⁴ Spartan, "Spartan Education Group Expands Reach with Acquisition of Illinois Aviation Academy," October 17, 2023, <https://www.spartan.edu/news/spartan-education-group-expands-reach-with-acquisition-of-illinois-aviation-academy/>; Aviation Institute of Maintenance, "Population Growth at Aviation Institute of Maintenance in Teterboro Prompts Relocation to Larger Facility in Hasbrouck Heights," July 26, 2023, <https://news.aviation.edu/population-growth-at-aviation-institute-of-maintenance-in-teterboro-prompts-relocation-to-larger-facility-in-hasbrouck-heights/>; Sofia Gonzalez, "Universal Technical Institute brings changes to Houston trade school after MIAT acquisition," December 12, 2023, <https://www.bizjournals.com/houston/news/2023/12/12/universal-technical-institute-consolidation.html>

⁵ U.S. Aviation Academy, "How Much Does Aircraft Mechanic School Cost?" <https://www.usaviationacademy.com/resource-center/aircraft-mechanic-school-cost/>

⁶ Allison Pohle, "Aircraft Technicians Make Six Figures and Airlines Can't Find Enough of Them," *The Wall Street Journal*, April 26, 2026, <https://www.wsj.com/business/airlines/aircraft-technicians-make-six-figures-and-airlines-cant-find-enough-of-them-efdb798c>

⁷ Katya Schwenk, "Private Equity is Getting Into the Airplane Repair Business," *Jacobin*, April 7, 2025, <https://jacobin.com/2025/04/airplane-maintenance-private-equity-safety/>

⁸ Meridian Capital, "MRO and Aftermarket M&A Industry Update," Winter 2025, Meridian Capital, https://meridianib.com/wp-content/uploads/Meridian-Capital-MRO-and-Aftermarket-MA-Industry-Update-Winter-2025_vF.pdf

⁹ Alex Derber, "MRO Memo: Private Equity Continues MRO Investment," January 9, 2026, <https://aviationweek.com/mro/aircraft-propulsion/mro-memo-private-equity-continues-mro-investments>

¹⁰ Edward Lopez, "GenNx360 Capital Partners Completes Sale of Precision Aviation Group to VSE Corporation for Approximately \$2.025 Billion in Cash and Equity," *Business Wire*, May 12, 2026, <https://www.businesswire.com/news/home/20260512000455/en/GenNx360-Capital-Partners-Completes-Sale-of-Precision-Aviation-Group-to-VSE-Corporation-for-Approximately-242.025-Billion-in-Cash-and-Equity>

Much of this activity has been driven by PE “buy-and-build” strategies, where firms acquire and consolidate smaller regional MRO providers into larger corporate platforms. This PE strategy can reduce opportunities for unionized labor, localized training, and apprenticeship pathways, and increase financial and operational pressures on workers. In fact, industry reports indicate aviation maintenance employers are struggling to retain workers, particularly younger mechanics, with one analyst reporting frontline labor attrition rates of 11.5 percent in North America — the highest globally.¹¹ These pressures on workers, including increased overtime demands, accelerated maintenance turnaround times, and fewer opportunities for hands-on training and supervision, increase maintenance-related risk, posing potential safety concerns for passengers.

The effects of PE consolidation ripple beyond the aviation workforce and into consumers’ pockets. Across industries, PE firms often pursue strategies focused on increasing revenue, reducing costs, and generating returns for investors, frequently through acquisitions and consolidation. This leads to reduced competition and increased market concentration, which contributes to higher training costs, rising maintenance expenses, and increased costs throughout the aviation industry. These costs are ultimately passed on to consumers through higher airfare and other travel-related expenses. In fact, since the post-pandemic travel rebound, domestic airline ticket prices have seen sharp periods of growth, with fares climbing by as much as 20 to 25 percent—far outpacing inflation.¹² At a time when PE firms are increasingly influencing both ends of the aviation mechanic workforce pipeline: the schools that train future mechanics and the MRO providers that help develop and employ them in the field, we are concerned that PE’s influence may be increasing costs throughout the aviation maintenance ecosystem, reducing access to training opportunities, and creating workforce and safety risks that warrant further review.

We urge the FAA to assess how PE acquisition, ownership, and consolidation may be raising costs for consumers and increasing maintenance-related safety risks. In order to gain a deeper understanding of this issue, please provide detailed responses to the following questions by July 14, 2026:

1. What percentage of FAA-approved Aviation Maintenance Technician Schools (AMTS) are privately operated institutions?
2. What percentage of privately operated FAA-approved AMTS programs are owned by, affiliated with, or backed by private equity firms or investment groups?
3. How much consolidation has occurred within the AMTS sector over the last ten years?
4. What factors are driving the price difference between AMTS public and private schools?

¹¹ Derek Costanza, Turbulence in MRO Growth, Oliver Wyman, 2024, <https://www.oliverwyman.com/our-expertise/insights/2024/apr/mro-survey-2024-aviation-mro-grows-amid-rising-costs-supply-chain-woes.html> ;Derek Costanza, “Not Enough Aviation Mechanics” Oliver Wyman, 2022, <https://arsa.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/OW-2023WorkforceAnalysis-Technicians.pdf>

¹² Brett Holzhauer, “Airline ticket prices are up 25%, outpacing inflation — here are the ways you can still save,” *CNBC Select*, June 15, 2026, <https://www.cnn.com/select/airline-ticket-prices-are-up-25-percent-why-and-how-to-save/>

5. Why do approximately one-third of aviation maintenance training seats remain unfilled despite extraordinary labor demand?
6. Has the FAA identified any curriculum concerns, reductions in training quality, or efforts to accelerate training timelines associated with the increased influence of private equity firms within AMTS programs?
7. How much consolidation in the aviation MRO sector has occurred in the last ten years?
8. Has the increased consolidation in the MRO industry led to a decrease in localized apprenticeship, training, or entry-level employment opportunities for aviation mechanics?
9. Has the FAA identified any workforce, labor, training, or safety concerns associated with the growing influence of private equity firms within the aviation MRO sector?
10. Has the FAA assessed whether consolidation within the aviation maintenance ecosystem could impact the long-term sustainability of the aviation mechanic workforce pipeline?

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator