

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 1, 2026

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

Dr. Catherine F. Cahill, Ph.D.
Director
Alaska Center for Unmanned Aircraft System Integration
University of Alaska Fairbanks
2156 Koyukuk Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99775

Dear Administrator Bedford and Director Cahill,

We are writing today to request an update regarding the recent suspension of flight operations at Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) test sites located in Oregon, including the Pendleton UAS Range, Northwest UAV in McMinnville, and Tillamook UAS Test Range. Our offices have been made aware that all flight operations at these locations have been paused since September 11, 2026, due to concerns at the University of Alaska Fairbanks UAS Test Site. As you know, the University of Alaska Fairbanks UAS Test Site serves as the designated administrator by the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) to test and develop UAS technology, and oversees operations for test sites across the Western part of the United States through the Pan-Pacific UAS Test Range Complex.

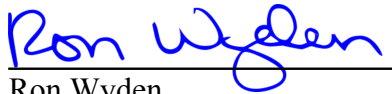
The University of Alaska Fairbanks' safety pause on all flight operations conducted under its Certificates of Authorization (COA) directly affects all three test sites located in Oregon, as well as their partners. While we understand that the pause was necessary due to the FAA's concerns regarding safety practices, oversight, and documentation, the situation has disrupted flight activity at all other test sites that operate under the University of Alaska Fairbanks.

In Oregon, this pause delays testing and development for aerospace and defense contractors, federal customers, and commercial UAS companies who operate at the Pendleton UAS Range, Northwest UAV in McMinnville, and Tillamook UAS Test Range. The situation has created significant uncertainty for Oregon communities. For example, the Pendleton UAS Range is a critical economic driver for the local economy, businesses, and companies that rely on UAS testing, and generates roughly \$2.4 million annually for the Eastern Oregon Regional Airport, making up roughly 82 percent of the total revenue at the airport. Our constituents have expressed concerns about how the ongoing pause affects the local economies across the state where UAS testing takes place, and they seek a timely resolution.

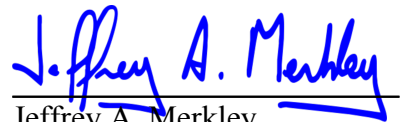
We understand that the FAA and the University of Alaska Fairbanks are currently working to resolve the concerns and resume flight activity for all partners who operate under their COA. We appreciate the FAA's efforts to review safety practices and conduct oversight. We also recognize the timeliness and importance of resuming operations at all test sites that have been impacted by the pause. Given the significant economic uncertainty facing the test sites that operate under the University of Alaska Fairbanks' COA, as well as their aerospace and defense partners, please provide us with a timeline for when the FAA and the University of Alaska Fairbanks will complete their reviews of the safety concerns and resume operations.

We appreciate both the FAA and University of Alaska Fairbanks working diligently to complete a full review of safety procedures and conduct oversight of test site operations before clearing the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and we look forward to the resolution that will ensure that test sites in Oregon are up and running as soon as possible. We appreciate your attention to this important matter and expect a response by no later than October 7, 2026.

Sincerely,



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator