

August 4, 2026

Cleveland City Council
601 Lakeside Ave, Room 220
Cleveland, OH 44114

RE: Protect Burke Lakefront Airport

Dear Council Members,

We are writing as a coalition of students and aviation professionals who rely upon access to Burke Lakefront Airport to launch and build our careers. As budding and current dispatchers, mechanics, pilots and more, we request that you protect Burke Lakefront Airport as a vital transportation, workforce development and economic hub for our city. While there are ongoing discussions regarding the alternative use of this space, we believe the airport provides unparalleled opportunities essential to a prosperous and competitive Cleveland.

Burke Lakefront is more than just a runway or the home of one of the nation's longest-running and most successful airshows. The airport is an economic engine that contributes \$195 million and 664 jobs annually to the local economy. Beyond these figures, the airport serves as an incubator for professional development where local dreams and careers take flight.

Our careers are a testament to this value. Burke Lakefront Airport exposed us to the vast possibilities within aviation, providing the training environment where our professional journeys began. The 2024 median annual wage for aircraft mechanics was \$79,140¹ and \$198,100 for pilots². These figures significantly exceed the national median of \$67,920³, demonstrating that the airport is a gateway to high-earning, fulfilling careers that allow Clevelanders to give back to their community.

For student pilots, Burke Lakefront's location is unique. As a towered, Class D, airport situated directly beneath the Class B "shelf" of Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE), it offers student pilots a rare, critical environment to master complex communication and navigation skills without disrupting commercial airline traffic. Losing this resource would degrade the quality of flight training in Ohio, forcing students to less complex environments that do not adequately prepare them for the rigors of professional flight. Experienced pilots also rely on BKL to maintain their currency and recency of experience. Closing this airport would not only impact current

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<https://www.bls.gov/ooh/installation-maintenance-and-repair/aircraft-and-avionics-equipment-mechanics-and-technicians.htm>

² <https://www.bls.gov/ooh/transportation-and-material-moving/airline-and-commercial-pilots.htm>

³ <https://data.bls.gov/oes/#/industry/000000>

students but would also limit the development of future generations of professionals across our state for years to come.

Furthermore, we request the City Council host a dedicated public hearing for users and supporters of Burke Lakefront Airport. Given that the Council afforded the City Administration opportunities to present their case for closure on January 21, February 4, April 1, and April 15, it is only just and democratic that a similar forum be provided for the community. Such a hearing would allow constituents and aviation professionals to share their unique perspectives, technical expertise, and vital concerns directly with the Council, ensuring a balanced and transparent decision-making process for the future of this critical asset.

By preserving Burke Lakefront Airport, the Council ensures that Cleveland remains a city of opportunity. We urge you to protect this vital resource and help Clevelanders achieve their highest potential.

Sincerely,

Noah Alapat, Professional pilot, The Ohio State University - Center For Aviation Studies

Matthew Baker, Office Manager, Zone Aviation

Joseph Barca, Desired corporate, Bowling Green State University

Jeremy Berger, ACMI Coordinator, STM Charters

Brittany Caroselli, Airside Experience Specialist, Signature Aviation

Peyton Correa, Line Service Technician, Bowling Green State University

Kimberly Dell-Wagner, Executive Director, Cleveland National Air Show, Inc.

Marissa DeRespinis, Pilot, Bowling Green State University

Tim Dixon, Lakefront Airport Preservation Partnership

Benjamin Doerr, Sr. Sales Manager, Micron

Megan Eaton, Professional Pilot, Kent State University

Hannah Ernst, Pilot, Ohio State University

Chris Gove, Dir. of Strategic Partnerships - Charters, STM Charters

Isabella Hinz, Alpha Eta Rho Kappa Alpha Chapter

Kevin Hirshman, Captain, Owens Corning

Wesley Holtz, Alpha Eta Rho Omicron Sigma Upsilon Chapter

Stephanie Johnson, Pilot, Delta Air Lines

Alex Johnson-Brown, Pilot, Delta Air Lines

Sue Keck, Pilot, MN24 Medevac

David Kizer, Pilot, Premier

Gregory Kulis, Pilot / Security Coordinator, Business Aviation Safety and Security LLC

Joseph Lampone, Aviation Operations Specialist/ACI, Kent State University

Mason Lovell, Law Student, SMU Dedman School of Law

Aryan Majhi, Pilot, Signature Aviation

Chris McCoy, Pilot, Jet Excellence

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