

Office of Federal Relations
THE TEXAS A&M UNIVERSITY SYSTEM

February 10, 2016

The Honorable Lamar Smith
U.S. House of Representatives
2409 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Smith:

Thank you for your leadership in advancing H.R.4489 – the “FAA Leadership In Groundbreaking High-Tech Research and Development Act.” The Texas A&M University System has a broad interest and expertise in manned and unmanned aircraft (UAS) research and testing, and I appreciate the opportunity to share our thoughts on the legislation.

We know the Committee was faced with the daunting task of developing legislation that fosters technology and innovation while maintaining the track record of safety with manned and unmanned flight. In an environment where technology and innovation are outpacing regulation, we applaud your efforts in developing a resolution that strikes a critical balance.

Texas A&M University has conducted UAS research for more than 17 years and was one of the first entities to conduct research for civilian application. Texas A&M’s researchers have continued to work with the FAA, NASA, NIST, NSF and other federal agencies to achieve goals set by the research community, private sector and federal regulators.

Additionally, Texas A&M University–Corpus Christi was named one of the six FAA UAS Test Sites in 2013. The six UAS Test Sites were selected to assist the FAA by providing research findings and operational experiences to ensure the safe integration of UAS into the nation's airspace. Information gathered at the test sites provides the FAA critical data regarding some of the stifling factors to UAS integration such as sense and avoid, command and control, ground control station standards and human factors, airworthiness, lost link procedures, and interoperability within the air traffic control system. This data will help the FAA develop regulations and operational procedures for future commercial and civil use of the national airspace.

We appreciate the bill’s organization of FAA’s research enterprise and the effort to avoid duplication across the federal entities charged with manned and UAS research. Organization and clarification, in our opinion, will accelerate the progress of research and testing for the

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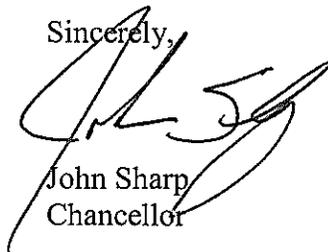
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advancement of UAS integration into the national airspace. The appointment of an Associate Administrator for Research and Development, UAS research road map, collision research, cybersecurity modeling and research are great steps forward.

Thank you again for bringing this critical authorization forward. As we embark on this "Kitty Hawk moment" for UAS, we look forward to working with you as the process moves forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "J. Sharp", written over the printed name and title.

John Sharp
Chancellor

cc: The Honorable Tommy Williams
Vice Chancellor for Federal and State Relations

Scott Sudduth, Esq.
Assistant Vice Chancellor & Director, Federal Relations