

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

May 7, 2024

The Honorable Michael Whitaker  
Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20591

Dear Administrator Whitaker:

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)'s attempt to forcibly reassign seventeen air traffic controllers from New York Terminal Radar Approach Control (TRACON/N90) to Philadelphia Tower/TRACON is unacceptable. We urge the FAA to rescind these reassignments immediately and explore alternative options.

This is not the first time the FAA has attempted to forcibly reassign air traffic controllers from N90 in its long-running mission to shift control of the Newark airspace to Philadelphia. This effort has been marked by multiple delays and a previous attempt to force air traffic controllers to relocate, which was met with justified opposition from both local controllers and Congress. The FAA ultimately decided to abandon that plan, making its recent forced reassignments both confusing and outrageous. All of this comes on top of the agency's initial reassurances that it would not require air traffic controllers to relocate as part of the New York/New Jersey/Philadelphia airspace redesign.

The agency has continued to throw money at the problem, hoping that higher incentive packages would entice volunteers to relocate. The compensation package offered as part of the forced reassignment notice shows that the FAA continues to hope money will solve the problem. However, the FAA has clearly failed to consider the many personal aspects of such a decision, including its effects on controller's families, relatives, homeownership, and community ties.

The controllers who have been designated for forcible reassignment include veterans who joined the FAA seeking stability after enduring frequent relocations during their military service. They accepted their positions at N90 believing they would be able to create stable, long-term homes for themselves and their families, not be forced to move or spend years apart as they did during active duty.

These controllers also include husbands and wives whose partners would be forced to leave jobs and communities or choose separation for two or more years. For example, one controller, who is engaged to be married in June, would be forced to spend the first two years of his marriage apart from his new wife. Homeowners with mortgages would be forced to make difficult financial

decisions. Many controllers who are primary caregivers for elderly parents or relatives would have to choose between caring for loved ones or keeping their job.

Reassigning controllers would also affect young children for whom relocation would be disruptive and potentially traumatic. Young couples in the process of building their families, and who made decisions to do so in New York near relatives and support systems, would have to make tough choices about their children's futures. One father, whose daughter was born with cerebral palsy requiring daily care, would have to search for a new team of doctors and support services with no guarantee that those services are sufficiently available in their new location.

All controllers reassigned against their will would be forced to leave a network of friends and extended family that they rely on for community, childcare, personal and professional connection, and mental health. For a demanding career like air traffic control, minimizing outside stressors through this network is essential to controllers' ability to do the job well. Forced reassignment to Philadelphia would rip controllers away from their families, homes, and safety nets and would add multiple stressors that could impede job performance and public safety.

The agency has cited staffing concerns as justification for shifting control of Newark airspace to Philadelphia. However, Newark is currently at 80% of full staffing levels with 33 certified controllers, which is almost equivalent to the FAA's national average. Current trainees are being certified quickly and are eager to make their careers at N90.

Air traffic controllers ensure the safety of almost three million passengers per day, or almost one billion people per year. They are essential to the safety and smooth operation of almost 100,000 flights daily and work in high-stress, fast-paced environments with the utmost professionalism and dedication to excellence. They are the backbone of our nation's aviation system.

Given this, we are shocked that the FAA would once again take the unwarranted step of reassigning controllers against their will, thereby jeopardizing existing staffing levels, weakening public safety, and unduly disrupting the lives of our valuable air traffic controllers. We urge the FAA to immediately rescind its reassignment plan and protect families from forced relocation.

Sincerely,



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Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



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Anthony D'Esposito  
Member of Congress



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Andrew R. Garbarino  
Member of Congress



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Nick LaLota  
Member of Congress



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Robert J. Menendez  
Member of Congress



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



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Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator