

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

November 15, 2023

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Transportation  
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE  
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg:

We write with regard to the Federal Aviation Administration's (FAA) continued delays in issuing licenses for space launches. As America's gateway to space, Florida leads the United States' launches that occur for vital national security satellites, breakthrough scientific instruments, and next-generation communications constellations—plus all of our human spaceflight missions. As an example, the Artemis Program, and the collaborations with international partners that the program has facilitated, demonstrates that space exploration has become an emblem of global cooperation and collaboration abroad, and has brought a sense of patriotism at home that Americans are going back to the moon. We are committed to promoting the continued success of Florida's rich history of space launch, but cannot do so while regulatory hurdles increasingly thwart the efficiency of required licensure.

A majority of launch activity is performed by private industry, in close partnership with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), the U.S. Department of Defense, and the Intelligence Community, adding incredible new capabilities, saving the taxpayer billions of dollars, and driving immense economic activity across the state and the country. Yet, we are concerned that bureaucracy in the licensing process has led to delays in space launches as well as regulatory hurdles that have hindered industry development and innovation. As launches have exponentially increased over recent years, the FAA must continue to refine management and administrative processes to more efficiently improve essential processes such as licensure. It is unacceptable for launches to be delayed due to paperwork that could easily be worked through.

We recognize the critical importance of public safety when it comes to space launches, but the current delays are stifling industry when the U.S. most needs continued success in space to compete with Russia and China. In particular, both the U.S. and China seek to land astronauts on the moon in coming years. As part of these efforts, several development and test flights will be required by NASA at Cape Canaveral and across the country. Regulatory delays will only leave the U.S. trailing behind in its endeavors to reach the moon, and leave industry lagging on executing its commitments to the program. This is just one example of the need to cut the red tape, and accelerate licensure processes. Our national security, and economic future, depend on an increased cadence of launches, and the FAA must have the tools and processes in place to support this growth.

To that end, we request the following information:

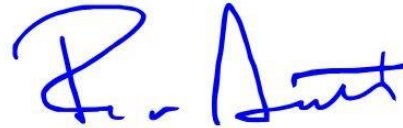
1. On average, how long does it take the FAA to issue a license?
  - a. What percentage of launch licenses take longer 6 months to issue?
2. How many people currently work on issuing licenses for commercial space launch?
3. When evaluating a permit for a revised launch vehicle, does the FAA review the entire application or does it only verify the changed component?
4. What scope of review does the FAA utilize in permitting; does it review only safety issues, or does it also review mission assurance issues?
5. What steps is the FAA taking to accelerate licensing processes?
6. What formal processes does the FAA have to provide industry with transparency on licensure reform?
7. Please provide any additional authorities the Department assesses are needed to improve and increase efficiency in administering licenses.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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Marco Rubio  
U.S. Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Rick Scott', with a stylized, cursive script.

Rick Scott  
U.S. Senator