

January 31, 2025

Elon Musk  
Administrator  
Department of Government Efficiency  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. Musk:

I write to seek information on the role that you may have played in the resignation of the head of the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA). This resignation—which you called for after the FAA fined your company for safety issues<sup>1</sup>—has left this critical agency without leadership while facing significant challenges, including the tragic midair crash of American Eagle Flight 5342 and an Army Black Hawk helicopter that killed 67 individuals—including at least six from Massachusetts<sup>2</sup>—on the approach to Washington Reagan National Airport on January 29, 2025.

On December 12, 2024, then-FAA Administrator Michael Whitaker announced he would be resigning from the agency as of January 20, 2025, the day that President Trump took office, despite having a term set to run through 2028.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Whitaker's resignation came at the same time you were ensconced in the Trump Transition: you had been named to serve as the Co-Chair of the Department of Government Efficiency, and had become so influential in the transition that you had been branded as the “co-President.”<sup>4</sup>

On December 16, 2024, I wrote to then-President-elect Trump regarding my concerns about your conflicts of interest as you attempted to serve as both a public official and the CEO of multiple large companies.<sup>5</sup> I warned President Trump that “the American public has no way of knowing whether the advice that he is whispering to you in secret is good for the country—or merely good for his own bottom line.”<sup>6</sup> And I asked for details on your specific role in the transition and the

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<sup>1</sup> Tweet by Elon Musk, September 25, 2024, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1838978117072805999>.

<sup>2</sup> Associated Press, “14 from figure skating community killed in plane crash, six of them from Boston club,” Dave Skretta and Jimmy Golen, January 30, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/dc-helicopter-jet-crash-figure-skaters-391a4c7bd0e617a08d9532a8faab206b>.

<sup>3</sup> CNBC, “FAA head Michael Whitaker to step down before Trump takes Office,” Leslie Josephs and Michael Sheetz, December 12, 2024, <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/12/12/federal-aviation-administration-head-michael-whitaker-to-step-down-jan-20.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Washington Post, “Elon Musk, the richest man in the world, becomes Donald Trump’s ‘first buddy’,” Ashley Parker, Josh Dawsey, and Michael Scherer, November 13, 2024, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2024/11/13/elon-musk-trump-presidential-transition/>.

<sup>5</sup> Letter from Senator Elizabeth Warren to President-elect Donald Trump, December 17, 2024, [https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter to trump transition reelonmuskconflictsofinterest.pdf](https://www.warren.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/letter%20to%20trump%20transition%20reelonmuskconflictsofinterest.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

administration, and the ethics rules that would be in place to ensure that you are “not using [your] role in the transition as an opportunity to fatten [your] own wallet.”<sup>7</sup> I have yet to receive a response to these questions.

The National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) investigation of this deadly aircraft collision is just beginning, and it is far too early to draw any conclusions on the root cause of the accident. However, the fact that FAA has no Senate-confirmed Administrator in place to lead the response provides a concrete example of how your self-interest may not be consistent with the public interest.

In September 2024, the FAA fined your company, SpaceX, over \$600,000 for failure to comply with safety requirements.<sup>8</sup> You then proceeded to repeatedly and publicly attack Administrator Whitaker. You threatened to sue the FAA for “regulatory overreach”<sup>9</sup> and tweeted that “[Mr. Whitaker] needs to resign.”<sup>10</sup> You called for “radical reform” at the agency,<sup>11</sup> and insisted that “there need to be resignations from FAA leadership.”<sup>12</sup>

You got what you wanted after President Trump was elected. On December 12, 2024, Mr. Whitaker announced his resignation, which took effect on Inauguration Day.<sup>13</sup> The Trump Administration immediately took aim at the FAA and at airline safety, announcing a federal hiring freeze<sup>14</sup> that included air traffic controllers despite a staffing shortage,<sup>15</sup> and disbanding the Aviation Safety Advisory Committee on January 21st.<sup>16</sup>

It is not clear what direct or indirect role you played in any of these decisions, but at a moment of crisis, with 67 dead, the FAA is understaffed and was without a Senate-confirmed leader. Indeed, at a press conference the day after the crash, newly confirmed Secretary of Transportation Sean Duffy was unable or unwilling to answer “questions about whether the FAA had an acting director in place to help manage the crisis.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Federal Aviation Administration, “FAA Proposes \$633,009 in Civil Penalties Against SpaceX,” press release, September 17, 2024, <https://www.faa.gov/newsroom/faa-proposes-633009-civil-penalties-against-spacex>.

<sup>9</sup> Tweet by Elon Musk, September 17, 2024, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1836097185395666955>.

<sup>10</sup> Tweet by Elon Musk, September 25, 2024, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1838978117072805999>.

<sup>11</sup> Tweet by Elon Musk, September 17, 2024, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1836182108412481871>.

<sup>12</sup> Tweet by Elon Musk, September 17, 2024, <https://x.com/elonmusk/status/1836151356668940762>.

<sup>13</sup> CNBC, “FAA head Michael Whitaker to step down before Trump takes Office,” Leslie Josephs and Michael Sheetz, December 12, 2024, <https://www.cnbc.com/2024/12/12/federal-aviation-administration-head-michael-whitaker-to-step-down-jan-20.html>.

<sup>14</sup> The White House, Executive Order, “Hiring Freeze,” January 20, 2025, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/presidential-actions/2025/01/hiring-freeze>.

<sup>15</sup> Global Trade, “US Air Traffic Controller Shortage Stalls Aviation and Air Cargo Growth,” December 7, 2024, <https://www.globaltrademag.com/us-air-traffic-controller-shortage-stalls-aviation-and-air-cargo-growth/>.

<sup>16</sup> Associated Press, “Trump fires heads of TSA, Coast Guard and guts key aviation safety advisory committee,” Josh Funk, January 21, 2025, <https://apnews.com/article/coast-guard-homeland-security-priorities-committees-trump-tsa-d3e4398c8871ada8d0590859442e092c>.

<sup>17</sup> The Verge, “The FAA is facing a major crisis without a leader because Elon Musk pushed him out,” Andrew J. Hawkins, January 30, 2025, <https://www.theverge.com/news/603113/faa-chief-musk-dc-plane-crash-crisis>.

Given this sequence of events, the American public deserves answers about any role you may have played in decisions made during the Trump transition or after January 20th about the FAA and airline safety. I therefore request that you provide answers to the following questions.

1. Did you, at any point between September 1, 2024 and the date of his resignation, have any conversations with or about Mr. Whitaker? If so, please describe the nature of these conversations, including whether you discussed Mr. Whitaker's resignation or firing?
2. Have you had conversations with President Trump or Trump Administration or transition officials regarding airline safety or the role of the Department of Transportation or FAA generally? If so, what was the nature of these discussions?
3. Have you—either formally or informally—provided recommendations to any Trump Administration or transition official regarding FAA or aircraft safety? If so, please list all such recommendations.
4. What is your current role in the Administration?
5. What are your formal responsibilities in this role? What additional informal responsibilities have you taken on?
6. What ethics rules govern your actions in the administration?
7. Specifically, are you recused from decisions that may affect SpaceX, Tesla, Neuralink, or any other personal financial interest?

Sincerely,



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator