

August 4, 2026

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

Dear Council Members,

As citizens of Northeast Ohio and users of the Burke Lakefront Airport, (BKL) we are writing to share critical information about the importance of BKL to the City of Cleveland and the Northeast Ohio region as you consider Mayor Justin Bibb's proposal to close the airport. While we understand the desire to explore lakefront development, BKL is not "underutilized land" – it is a high-functioning transportation hub and an economic engine. Closing this airport would not only disrupt regional commerce but would create a permanent void in Cleveland's infrastructure that can never be replaced.

Significant Economic Impact

Burke Lakefront Airport is a vital contributor to the city's fiscal health. According to the most recent economic impact studies, the airport supports \$195 million in direct annual economic activity and 664 jobs. Unlike many municipal assets, BKL serves as a gateway for high-value tax revenue and corporate investment that directly fuels the downtown economy.

The Cleveland National Air Show: A Community Landmark

For over 60 years, the Cleveland National Air Show has been the city's premier Labor Day tradition.

- **Economic Surge:** The show attracts over **100,000 visitors** annually, filling hotel rooms, restaurants, and local businesses.
- **STEM Inspiration:** It serves as a massive educational platform, inspiring the next generation of pilots, mechanics, and engineers.
- **Viability:** Without BKL's unique lakeside runways and infrastructure, this world-class event – and the millions of dollars it pours into the city – would likely cease to exist.

A Critical Reliever for Cleveland Hopkins International Airport (CLE)

BKL is identified by the Federal Aviation Administration as the primary reliever airport for CLE. By absorbing business and recreational aircraft, medevac flights, private charters, and flight training operations, BKL ensures that Hopkins can efficiently focus on high-capacity commercial airline traffic.

- **Efficiency:** Without BKL, the increased congestion and diverse mix of aircraft at Hopkins would lead to longer taxi times, flight delays, and increased operational costs for major airlines and in turn Clevelanders and visitors who rely on CLE.
- **Safety:** Separating slow-moving general aviation from heavy commercial liners is a fundamental tenet of FAA safety standards in busy metropolitan airspace.

The Lifeline for Business and Healthcare

Cleveland's reputation as a global leader in healthcare and manufacturing relies on the proximity of BKL.

- **Medical Flights:** BKL is the preferred destination for **organ transplant flights** and critical patient transfers for the Cleveland Clinic and University Hospitals due to its proximity to University Circle. In life-or-death situations, the time difference for ground transportation between landing at BKL versus Hopkins or Cuyahoga County Airport is the difference between success and tragedy.
- **Corporate Connectivity:** Fortune 500 companies utilize BKL to bring executives and clients directly into the heart of the city. Closing the airport sends a message that Cleveland is closing its "front door" to global business.

Training the Future Workforce

Our flight schools and other programs at BKL are currently addressing the national pilot shortage. These schools provide a direct career path for local students into high-paying aviation careers. Removing this facility removes the "classroom" for hundreds of aspiring aviators.

Opportunity to Speak in Support of the Airport

Thank you for conducting a series of public hearings to weigh the pros and cons of the administration's proposed closure, however a balanced decision-making process necessitates that equal consideration be given to those who rely on this critical infrastructure. In the interest of fairness and transparency, we formally request that the City Council convene a hearing to invite testimony from users and supporters of Burke Lakefront Airport.

Conclusion

The "highest and best use" of this land is its current use: a world-class aviation facility that connects Cleveland to the global economy. Once an airport pavement is removed for parks or apartments, it is gone forever. We urge the City Council to protect this irreplaceable asset and work with us to modernize – rather than dismantle – Burke Lakefront Airport.

Respectfully,

Nancy Bsales
COO
4Air

Lawrence Ross
CEO
Aerospace Engineering Associates

Sally Veith
Executive Director
Air Medical Operators Association

Geroge Katsikas
Founder / Owner / CEO
Aitheras Aviation

Ben O'Brien
CEO
Alpha Eta Rho

David Norton
Aviation Attorney

Lewis Felts
Director
Aviation Maintenance Technician Schools,
Inc.

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

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

Nick DeVito
Executive Committee & Board Member
EXP REALTY

Alexandra Lausin
Executive Director
International Women's Air & Space Museum

Don Commings
Director
Advanced Drainage Systems

Larry Hecht
SVP of Ops
Aery Aviation

Ayman Elayyadi
Student President
AirCats

Tim Kearns
President
Albatross Air Inc

Drew Feguson
Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Argonaut

Ronald McLin
Asst. Director
Aviation Career Education Academy

Logan Nielsen
Captain
Bobbie Doug Aviation

Jon Wittoesch
Chief Pilot
Celeritas Aviation

Heidy Saxon
Corporate flight attendant
Contractor

JJ Frigge
President
Hartzell Propeller

Laz Frisone
Asst. Director of Operations
Jet Excellence

Matthew Boyd
Chief Pilot
Kenan Advantage Group

Isabella Hinz
Kent State Alpha Eta Rho

Tim Dixon
Lakefront Airport Preservation Partnership

Clayton Smith
RN, LifeLine Pilots Command Pilot
Lifeline Pilots

Kelly Rozick
Customer Success Manager
Locallogy

David McCredie
Owner
McCredie Insurance Agency

Michael Staszal
Manager
McLarens Aviation

Benjamin Doerr
Sr. Sales Manager
Micron

Aimee Maruyama
President & CEO
National Aviation Hall of Fame

Garrett White
National Director of Aviation Programs
Nationwide Organ Recovery Transport
Alliance (NORA)

Jim Durborow
Director of Aviation
NFI

Captain Pedro
Leroux President
NetJets Association of Shared Aircraft Pilots

Ned Parks
President
Northeast Ohio Pilots Association

Jessica Neptune
President
Ohio Regional Business Aviation Association

Jay Treat II
Director of Aviation
Owens Corning

Chris Saxton
CEO
PACE Inc.

Stephen Lehner
Owner
RealClean Aircraft Detailing - Cleveland

Bob Rose
Owner
Rose Metal Industries | Rose Iron Works

Michael J. Smith
President
Scope Aircraft Finance

Natalie Martinez
Director of Government Relations
Signature Aviation

Paul J. Singerman
Chairman and Principal
Singerman, Mills, Desberg & Kauntz Co.,
L.P.A.

Kenneth Hagan
President and COO
SPIROL International

Chris Gove
Director, Charters Strategic Partnerships
STM Charters

Carl Calvin
Flight Instructor
T and G Flying Club

Nick Crate
Charter Department
Zanesville Aviation

Matthew Baker
Office Manager
Zone Aviation

Michael Thomas
Sr. Director
Stryker

Leah Hetzel
Pilot, First Officer
Women in Aviation Cleveland Chapter

Anthony Zimmerman
Owner/President
Zimmerman Building Company, LLC