The Honorable Michael P. Huerta  
Acting Administrator  
Federal Aviation Administration  
800 Independence Avenue, S.W., #1010  
Washington, D.C. 20591  

Dear Acting Administrator Huerta:  

It is my understanding that the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) is considering imposing standards for parachute landing areas at airports with skydiving operations. As should be the case with any safety improvement, it is important that your agency weighs carefully the safety benefit that may result from new standards against the potential economic impact, particularly to small businesses. Across the country, small businesses are struggling. Skydiving businesses are no different. As the FAA seeks comments on the proposed new standards, and before you issue the new standards, it is important to provide a full accounting of all of the costs and anticipated benefits.  

Under current regulations, skydiving businesses operate on airport property with the consent of the airport manager. Drop zone safety is a shared responsibility between airport managers and operators of skydiving businesses, and to my knowledge, it is a responsibility they have performed admirably. Furthermore, skydiving operations are an important economic driver for many small airports across the country and the skydiving industry sustains critical jobs in my Congressional District, and many others. Recently, concerns have been expressed from skydiving businesses that the new standards under consideration could have a devastating impact on skydiving businesses across the country.  

Therefore, I request that as you consider the new standards, you conduct a thorough benefit-cost analysis. In addition, to allow the FAA to better understand the impact of the proposed standards, I ask you to extend the comment period to May 31, 2012 in order to provide skydiving businesses that have been closed during the winter season the time needed to properly assess the potential impact, and provide that information to the FAA. Finally, I ask the FAA to provide a list of the accidents that have motivated this new standard so that we may better understand the intended benefit of the proposed standards.
If you have any questions regarding this request, please contact Bailey Edwards on the Aviation Subcommittee staff at (202) 226-3220. Thank you for your attention to this important aviation issue.

Sincerely,

John L. Mica
Chairman