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Boulder City Council
1777 Broadway
Boulder, CO 80302

Dear Members of the Boulder City Council,

My name is Gitanjali Rao, I'm a 17-year-old student who lives in Lone Tree, CO, who attended STEM School Highlands Ranch and will be attending the Massachusetts Institute of Technology this coming fall as a bioengineering major. I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the potential decommissioning of the Boulder Airport and the proposed closure of the glider port.

As a dedicated member of the gliding community over the past three years and more importantly, a passionate advocate for the preservation of aviation, I urge you to carefully consider the lasting impact that decisions such as these could have on our community as we grow as individuals.

Over the past 3-4 years, I've had the opportunity to conduct research in a variety of labs within the University of Colorado Denver, MIT, and Harvard, focusing on solutions like quicker vaccine development, detection of lead in drinking water, opioid addiction diagnosis, and tumor drug delivery mechanisms to create a positive impact in the community around me. Along with this, I took it upon myself to run workshops for students worldwide, including refugee camps, reaching about 76,000 across 45 countries and six continents, with a similar passion of mine. Through this, I have been featured in national news with titles such as America's Top Young Scientist, Forbes 30 under 30 in the Science Category, TIME's Top Young Innovator, and TIME Magazine Kid of the Year.

However, my success does not speak for itself. I wouldn't be writing this letter or stating my accomplishments without the problem-solving skills, dedication, commitment, and perseverance that gliding and aviation has taught me. Despite weather concerns, travels, and a runway paving, I committed to receiving my private pilot certificate, which I am honored to have received on August 15th. Due to the flexibility and funding that Mile High Gliding, Wings over the Rockies, and Colorado Pilot's Association provided me, I was able to accomplish one of my biggest dreams. After three years of practicing, solo-ing and studying for the practical exam, I still feel the same connection with flying that I did in February of 2020. My passion for the skies directly parallels my passion for being in the lab and is an equally important component of my life that I do not intend to lose touch of anytime soon.

Beyond its recreational value, the Boulder airport strives to bring a community together of pilots, changemakers, and especially students and women, just like me. More importantly, the airport and glider port provide invaluable opportunities for STEM education, offering young minds the chance to engage with aeronautics and inspire future generations of aviators and engineers, or even bioengineers. As I continue my undergraduate journey and beyond, I hope to start a biotechnology company while also returning to my hometown and flying with my newly secured certificate, potentially even participating in angel flights.

I urge you to consider alternative solutions to balance the community's needs without decommissioning the airport I called my second home for my entire high school career. I inspired students in my community and my school to take up flying. Within this group, about 50-60 students have taken aviation or aerospace engineering as their career path, without 5-10 flying out of the Boulder airport. The current and future generations of pilots will benefit from the airport and the glider port just as much, or if not more, than I did.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Gitanjali Rao

MIT Class of '27

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