

# Congress of the United States

## Washington, DC 20515

October 19, 2021

The Honorable Joe Biden  
President of the United States  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to today to urge your Administration to fully invest in a robust F-35 Lightning II program in its Fiscal Year 2023 Department of Defense (DoD) budget request and the Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP).

We agree with Air Force Chief of Staff General Charles Q. Brown that, the F-35 is “the cornerstone of our fighter fleet, and it will be for the foreseeable future.” The F-35 is also an unrivaled national asset that strengthens national security, enhances global partnerships, and powers economic growth across our communities.

As you well know, our adversaries continue to advance surface-to-air missile systems and develop their own stealth fighters at an astonishing pace. Meanwhile, the average age of the U.S. Air Force fighter fleet is approaching 30 years and the cost to operate and support these legacy aircraft continues to rise. The U.S. must modernize our fighter inventory to ensure we can sustain a strong national defense and maintain an advantage to counter the pacing threat – China. The F-35 is made right here in America by a diverse and high-tech American workforce. It is also the only fighter in production that can produce aircraft in the numbers required to revitalize our aging fighter force. It is our duty as Americans to ensure that those men and women who protect our freedoms have the best equipment, we can provide to ensure each mission brings them safely back home.

Thus, it is essential that we continue to increase production numbers of our nation’s only 5th generation stealth fighter to recapitalize our fighter fleet and ensure the United States maintains air dominance. DoD officials have testified for years that the DoD needs to buy F-35s in growing numbers so that the U.S. services – and our allies – have enough F-35 aircraft by the mid-2020s to stay ahead of the rapidly growing threat. The program is built on the U.S. services and those of our 14 allies buying these aircraft in quantities that leverage economies of scale for development, production, and sustainment. Today, the F-35 is the most advanced fighter in the world and an affordable option that provides unmatched capability to any 4<sup>th</sup> generation fighter.

If we are serious about deterring our near-peer adversaries, we must have close coordination with our allies and partners and live up to the joint commitment we made at the outset of the program. The F-35 is a unique enabler of that. In fact, this summer the British carrier strike group including the HMS Queen Elizabeth has been sailing in the South China sea, and on board the carrier are British and American F-35Bs, working together as one joint coalition force. The HMS Queen Elizabeth is sending a strong message to China that we still have the most modern capabilities in the world, and that we will work together to deter aggression and keep the Indo-Pacific region free and open. The F-35 is the lynchpin, bringing together fourteen allied and partner nations, providing unmatched interoperability and enabling regional deterrence and diplomacy.

Not only is the F-35 critical for the national security of the U.S. as well as our allies and partners, but it is also vital to the U.S. manufacturing base. Across our country more than 1,800 suppliers contribute to the F-35, with one in every two of those companies being a small and/or disadvantaged business. The F-35 supports more than 254,000 high-tech, high-paying American jobs annually with thousands of those workers who are skilled union members. Further, throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, this workforce has remained committed and resilient; they are a true national security asset. At a time when our economy has suffered the devastating effects of COVID-19, this program has continued to create jobs, foster workforce development, and spur economic opportunity.

It is disappointing that year after year DoD continues to flat-line F-35 production investments, defer needed readiness funding, and underfund advanced capabilities for this critical fleet. This is one of the reasons Congress has consistently supported additional investment in the program.

Mr. President, the F-35 is both affordable and more capable than any other aircraft proposed in the budget; it is a technological marvel that represents the best of American manufacturing. Additionally, there is capacity to deliver additional aircraft which will provide greater capability to our men and women in uniform, invest taxpayer dollars in modern technology, and protect U.S. jobs and the critical manufacturing base. Now is the time to make the investments in America and uphold our commitments to our allies to buy a minimum of 100 F-35s for our U.S. services per year, invest in the advanced capabilities to stay ahead of the threats, and fund the sustainment profile necessary to support these aircraft for decades to come. We urge you to direct the DoD to ensure that it is making smart investments in the F-35 program as you prepare your FY23 budget request and Future Years Defense Plan (FYDP).

Sincerely,



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Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



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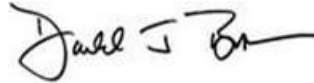
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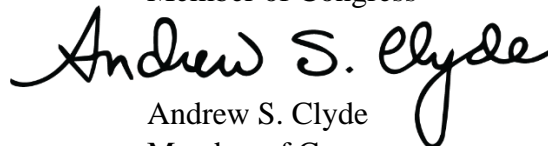
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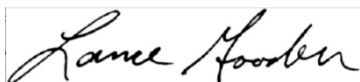
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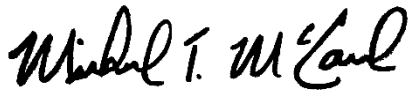
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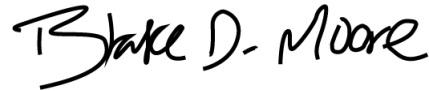
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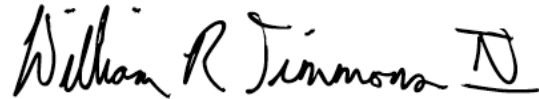
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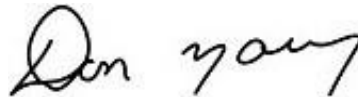
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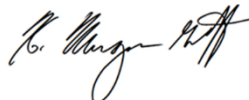
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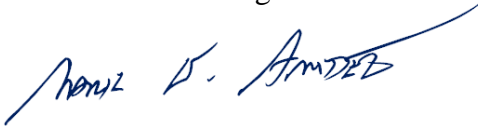
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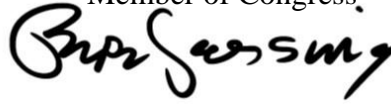
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Jeff Duncan  
Member of Congress

CC:

The Honorable Lloyd Austin, Secretary of Defense

The Honorable Shalanda Young, Acting Director, Office of Management and Budget