

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 28, 2021

The Honorable Adam Smith
Chairman
House Armed Service Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Betty McCollum
Chairwoman
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
H-405, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mike Rogers
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee
2216 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert
Ranking Member
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
H-405, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairs and Ranking Members:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 defense authorization and appropriations bills, we strongly urge your continued support for the F-35 Lightning II program.

As you well know, our adversaries continue to advance surface-to-air missile systems and develop their own stealth fighters. Thus, it is essential that we continue to increase production of our nation's only 5th generation stealth fighter to recapitalize our fighter fleet and ensure the United States maintains air dominance. The F-35 is the only fighter in production that can produce aircraft in the numbers required to recapture our aging fighter force.

The F-35 strengthens national security, enhances global partnerships and powers economic growth. The premise of the program is built on the US services and those of our allies buying these aircraft in large number to leverage economies of scale, both in production and sustainment.

Today, the three US Services and our allies are flying more than 615 aircraft operating from 27 locations around the world. The program is beginning to reach maturity and warrants continued support and investment to keep our fighter fleets relevant for decades to come.

It is critical that the DoD and our allies stay the course and invest in the readiness, rate and relevance of the F-35 and F135 propulsion system. Global threats continue to rise. This requires that we continue to advance our 5th generation F-35 fleet through proper investment. Today, the procurement of the F-35 is below the cost of any new 4th generation tactical fighter. The F-35 industrial base of more than 1,800 suppliers and more than 254,000 direct and indirect jobs across the country is ready to continue the ramp to full rate production (80As, 24Bs, and 30Cs), while maintaining focus on driving down sustainment costs across the enterprise.

Last December, in the 2021 Consolidated Appropriations Act, Congress appropriated \$9.6 billion for purchase of 96 F-35s (60As, 10Bs, and 26Cs). We are concerned that any cuts in the Fiscal Year 2022 will leave the Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps with a capability gap that legacy aircraft or new variants thereof cannot fulfill, while also reducing the enterprise's ability to

continue cost reduction activities at the planned rates, ultimately adding unnecessary life cycle cost into the system.

The F-35 is a great deterrent for the near peer threats of China and Russia; and as such, we urge the committees to support readiness (sustainment), rate (production ramp) and relevance (modernization) for both the airframe (F-35) and the propulsion system (F135).

Relevance (Modernization): Support robust investment for continued capability enhancements for the air vehicle and engine to meet the evolving threats. This may require additional funds to restore previous funding reductions and to address performance challenges to support the integration of new weapons and critical capabilities necessary to keep the F-35 ahead of our adversaries. Invest in propulsion growth to ensure the capabilities of the F135 (thrust, fuel efficiency, power and thermal management) are commensurate with the air vehicle and weapons systems requirements.

Readiness (Sustainment): Support funding to increase readiness and aircraft availability, help drive out sustainment costs, and increase repair capacity across the F-35 enterprise, including the air vehicle and engine. Current forecasts predict that the organic depots may only be able to meet approximately 42% of the required repair capacity. Options exist to make up for this capacity shortfall including additional funding in Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs) repair capacity, as well as expansion of existing Engine Repair Facilities (ERFs) to supplement the maintenance and repair capacity of organic depots. As such, we would urge the committees to consider additional funding for OEM and ERF maintenance and repair capacity.

Further, additional funding is required for the F-35 test system spares and the F135 propulsion system spares, in order to adequately support the USG depot component repair capabilities and the F135 engine availability. The reliability of the depot repair throughput and F-35/F135 mission availability are at risk without these critical spares.

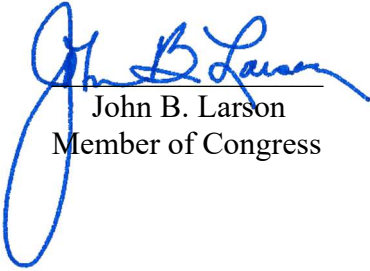
In addition, adequate investments in the Reliability and Maintainability Improvement Program (RMIP) and Component Improvement Program (CIP) will not only increase readiness but also bring costs down over the life of the program – the F-35 RMIP program has been dramatically under-funded compared to legacy platforms. Investments in the F135 CIP are critical to maintaining flight safety and improving system operational readiness while reducing life cycle cost. Historically, investments in RMIP and CIP have yielded greater than a 7:1 return on investment.

Lastly, we believe that an F-35 long-term, outcome-based sustainment contract will guarantee performance metrics at a fixed-price — a win-win for our men and women in uniform and the American taxpayers.


Rate (Production): Support the budget request and any service unfunded requirements to incrementally fund a production ramp toward full rate production (80As, 24Bs, and 30Cs) as well as initial spare parts and spare engines.

Thank you for your continued support of the F-35 program and for your leadership on defense and national security issues.

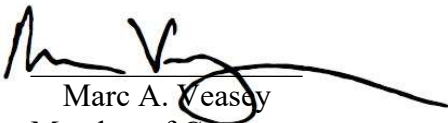
Sincerely,



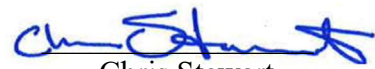
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