

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 5, 2019

The Honorable Patrick Shanahan
Acting Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301-1000

Dear Acting Secretary Shanahan:

We write to express our alarm regarding recent reports that the Department of Defense Fiscal Year 2020 budget request will only include 78 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter jets—six fewer than projected in last year’s forecast numbers. Cutting our only fifth generation fighter jet for any military service would be a mistake, and we urge you to reconsider this decision or provide immediate justification for this potential cut.

The rapid acquisition of this aircraft remains the only viable path forward to equip the Air Force, Navy, and Marine Corps with a fifth generation fighter fleet. The F-35 possesses unmatched lethality and survivability, and is critical to achieving air superiority in future air-to-air and air-to-surface threat environments as our near peer competitors quickly pursue technology advancements that threaten our fourth generation fighter fleet. As the nation’s only fifth generation fighter aircraft currently in production, the F-35 requires robust and consistent funding to support a ramp up to full-rate production, in addition to investment in modifications to ensure readiness.

The F135 engine is the most powerful propulsion system and most advanced engine developed for a fighter aircraft, powering all three variants of the F-35 Lightning II. Manufactured at Pratt & Whitney facilities in East Hartford and Middletown, the F135 engine is affordable and adaptive, delivering unmatched advances in safety, design, performance, and reliability. The F-35 program employs over 11,000 Connecticut constituents—directly and indirectly—with 78 first-tier suppliers and other statewide suppliers that provide parts to primes. We are committed to ensuring an efficient production schedule to protect the production of the F-35 while ensuring that the United States and our international partners can benefit from this significant capability.

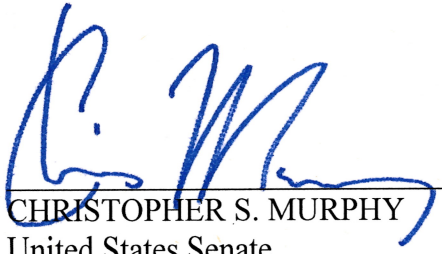
Congress has consistently added F-35 aircraft above successive Administration’s requests, restoring procurement to the projected program level when the Pentagon has requested funding below the projected production ramp-up rates. We are prepared to work with our colleagues on a bipartisan basis in the FY 2020 budget cycle to—once again—secure full funding for the game-changing F-35 to ensure that our warfighters have the most capable, lethal, and

stealth fighter fleet. Thank you for your immediate attention to this important issue and we look forward to reviewing your budget justification as soon as possible.

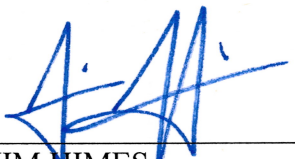
Sincerely,



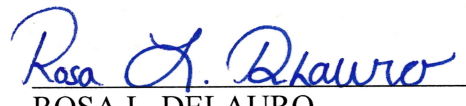
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



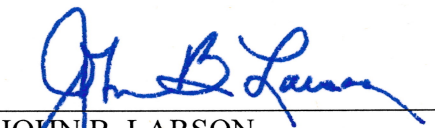
CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



JIM HIMES
Member of Congress



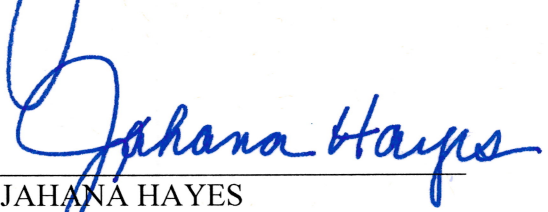
ROSA L. DELAURO
Member of Congress



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress



JAHANA HAYES
Member of Congress