

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 27, 2023

The Honorable Jack Reed
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Roger Wicker
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Defense Appropriations Subcommittee
S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen and Ranking Members:

As you consider the Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 defense authorization and appropriations bills, we strongly urge your continued support for the F-35 Lightning II program. The F-35 is the only 5th generation stealth fighter currently produced by the United States and our allies, and it is imperative that we continue to invest in the program to increase the capacity and capability required to deter or prevail against near-peer competitors in any potential conflict.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine, as well as China's continued growing aggression in the Indo-Pacific and around the world, have highlighted the need for continued production rate, modernization, and sustainment of the F-35 program.

The F-35 is providing unmatched stealth, connectivity, and interoperability with our allies and enables alliance-based deterrence and diplomacy. It redefines how we train, fight and win with our allies enabling critical joint capabilities and building coalitions while strengthening global security. Further, it powers job growth, workforce development, and economic opportunity across the United States.

As global threats continue to rise, it is critical that the United States and our allies stay the course and continue to invest in F-35 production rate, modernization, and sustainment. As such we would urge the committees to:

- Support the President's FY24 Budget Request (83 F-35s) and any unfunded requirements to support a ramp toward full rate production (80As, 24Bs, and 30Cs for the U.S. Services). A minimum of 89 aircraft is needed in FY24 in order to meet warfighter requirements and to maximize efficiencies along the production line.
- Support full funding for planned modernization and retrofit activities for FY24 for the integration of advanced capabilities to continually outpace the threat. Support additional Developmental Test aircraft to accelerate adoption and integration of new advanced capabilities.

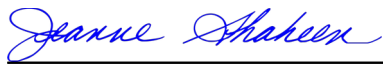
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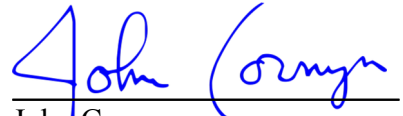
- Support funding for U.S. Government depot stand-up and activation and for initial spares in order to increase readiness and aircraft availability, help drive down sustainment costs, and increase repair capacity across the F-35 enterprise. Additionally, we would encourage the committees to promote a long-term, outcome-based sustainment approach for the program that will guarantee performance metrics at a fixed-price — a win-win for our men and women in uniform and the American taxpayers.

Thank you for your continued support of the F-35 program and for your leadership in support of our military and national security.

Sincerely,



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



John Cornyn
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



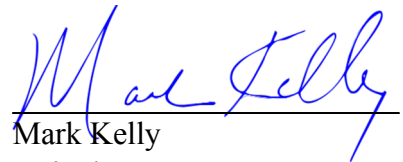
Thom Tillis
United States Senator



Joe Manchin III
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



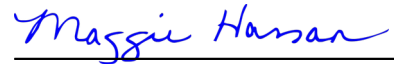
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Dan Sullivan
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