NATURAL RESOURCES COMMITTEE BUDGET COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States House of Representatives Washington, DC 20515-0603

April 28, 2022

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The Honorable Betty McCollum Chair Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee Defense U.S. House of Representatives 2256 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert Ranking Member Committee on Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense U.S. House of Representatives 2205 Rayburn HOB Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Calvert:

As you begin crafting the fiscal year (FY) 2023 Defense Appropriations bill, I respectfully request the Committee prioritize the necessary resources for increased production and planned buys for the F-35 program.

The F-35 Strike Fighter is a lynchpin of our national defense. Continued commitment to the F-35 is essential to meet the growing global threat. It is critical that we continue to invest in the F-35 production – our nation's only 5th generation stealth fighter – in order to reduce overall program costs, allow our troops to continue their important mission, and ensure the United States maintains its competitive edge.

Unfortunately, the President's budget requests have failed to adequately supply our armed forces. For example, the Colorado National Guard, specifically the 140th Wing, needs to replace their aging fighters with this 5th generation aircraft. The President's DoD budget request reduces planned buys by 33 aircraft. For the 140th Wing, this is the equivalent of 1, possibly 2 fighter squadrons. Keeping the planned number of buys consistent with our needs and continuing to support the program will allow our troops to have the equipment they need to accomplish critical missions.

The F-35 aircraft costs have come down more than 70 percent since the procurement of the first production aircraft more than 13 years ago. In the most recent contract, the cost of the F-35s has dropped to \$77.9 million per aircraft, which is less than the price of a non-stealthy and far less capable 4th generation fighter.

Continued commitment to the F-35 is essential to meet the growing global threat, but the program also contributes to our national economy. In Colorado alone, the F-35 program supports 1,840 jobs annually and \$226.8 million dollars for the state economy. Due to the proximity of the United States Air Force Academy, Colorado's Third Congressional District and Colorado's manufacturing industry as a whole will also benefit by expanding the program and increasing the increased production and planned buys for the F-35 program.

I appreciate your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

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Lauren Boebert Member of Congress