

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 6, 2017

The Honorable John McCain
Chairman
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Jack Reed
Ranking Member
Senate Armed Services Committee
228 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman McCain and Ranking Member Reed:

We write regarding the conference committee for the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2018 (NDAA). As passed by the Senate, this legislation contains provisions that strengthen defense policy and fortify our national security. As conference negotiations begin with your House counterparts, we urge you to ensure that \$1.3 billion for six CH-53Ks secured in the Senate-passed NDAA is supported in the final version of the NDAA.

The U.S. Marine Corps will rely on the CH-53K to complete an array of missions on land and at sea for decades to come, as they have done successfully with CH-53 predecessor aircraft for over half a century. As the world's leading heavy-lift helicopter, the CH-53K provides significant improvements – including capability, maintainability, interoperability, survivability, reliability, and cost of ownership compared to predecessor aircraft. Earlier this year, the Department of Defense approved the Milestone C decision for the CH-53K, proving the maturity of the program and paving the way forward for low rate production.

While the President's budget request included four CH-53Ks, the Senate surpassed this to fund six, satisfying the Marine Corps' top aviation unfunded request. As such, we seek to ensure that funding for this program remains robust to ensure a reliable production ramp rate while remaining on schedule and within budget.

We thank you for your consideration of this request and look forward to working with you on this matter.

Sincerely,



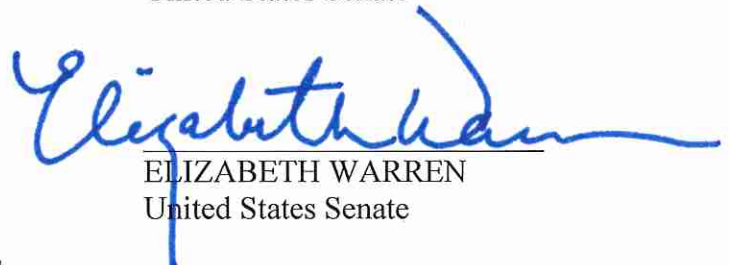
RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



EDWARD J. MARKEY
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ELIZABETH WARREN
United States Senate



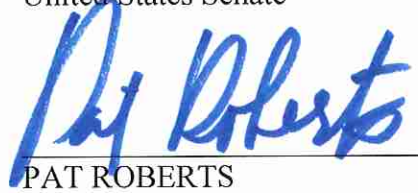
MARCO RUBIO
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BILL NELSON
United States Senate



JERRY MORAN
United States Senate



PAT ROBERTS
United States Senate

cc: Chairman Mac Thornberry, House Armed Services Committee
Ranking Member Adam Smith, House Armed Services Committee