

April X, 2021

The Honorable Betty McCollum  
Chair  
Subcommittee on Defense Committee on  
Appropriations  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ken Calvert  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Defense Committee on  
Appropriations  
1016 Longworth House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair McCollum and Ranking Member Calvert:

As you develop the Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 Defense appropriations bill, we request your strong bipartisan support for the Virginia-class attack submarine and the Columbia-class sea-based deterrence submarine.

### *Virginia-class Submarine*

In recent years, Congress has heard consistent and alarming testimony about the growing capabilities and increased undersea activity of competitors like Russia and China. For example, just last January Vice Adm. Andrew "Woody" Lewis, commander of U.S. Second Fleet, noted that he is seeing an "ever-increasing number of Russian submarines" deploying to the Atlantic. Admiral Phillip Davidson, Commander of the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, told Congress that "My day-to-day [submarine] requirement is met by slightly over 50 percent of what I've asked for."

Attack submarine capabilities remain one of our most distinct national security advantages. However, as you know, our attack submarine force will face the deepest and most prolonged shortfall below requirements of any ship type over the next thirty years. That is why Congress has strongly supported and defended a consistent two-a-year build rate of Virginia-class attack submarines that commenced in 2011.

As you know, last year Congress rejected the initial FY 2021 shipbuilding budget that would have broken the two-per-year cadence by cutting one Virginia-class submarine. This proposal to request one attack submarine was contrary to the National Defense Strategy, the needs of our combatant commanders, and a decade of Congressional action in support of a steady two-a-year build rate to support our national security and ensure stability in the industrial base. Both the House Defense Appropriations 2021 mark and the House Seapower and Projection Forces Subcommittee NDAA 2021 mark on bipartisan votes fully restored the missing attack submarine. Both provisions were enacted last December in the 2021 Omnibus and 2021 NDAA.

Moving ahead, preserving a consistent production schedule continues to be key to shipyard and industrial base stability, as well as the Navy's operational requirements. It is also critically important that we continue to invest in the development of future undersea capabilities both to maintain our leading edge in the undersea domain and preserve critical competencies in the submarine design workforce. **To that end, we respectfully request your strong support for ensuring that the FY2022 defense appropriations bill fully funds the sustained two a year build rate and provide the resources needed to fully support the development of our critical undersea capabilities.**

### *Columbia-class Submarine*

The replacement for the Ohio-class submarine program, which has faithfully deterred our adversaries for over 40 years, represents a critical leg of our nation's nuclear triad and will carry nearly 70 percent of the

nation's deployed nuclear arsenal. This program is the Navy's number one acquisition priority and must maintain its aggressive construction schedule to continue to meet the nation's strategic deterrence goals. The 2018 Nuclear Posture Review reaffirmed the central role that our sea-based deterrent will play in the coming decades.

As you well know, shipbuilders and suppliers from across the country have been hard to work to ensure the Columbia-class, our nation's top defense acquisition priority, begins successfully. Last year, with strong support from Congress, the Navy awarded a contract for the construction of the first two Columbia class submarines, allowing full scale construction to begin in October 2020 after more than a decade of preparation. Notably, the program began construction with 90% design completion, nearly twice the design level in the Virginia class program. However, the program remains on a tight, razor thin schedule with little margin for error without significant impacts on our strategic deterrent requirements.

The sustainment of our sea-based strategic deterrent is a requirement supported on a bipartisan basis and validated by our national defense and nuclear posture strategics. Continued strong support from Congress will ensure that this program remains on track and on schedule. **To this end, we urge your support for fully funding the Columbia-class program of record.**

### *Supplier Development*

The submarine industrial base, comprised of over 5,000 suppliers across nearly all 50 states, is key to the success of the Columbia program. Notably, the submarine supplier base has decreased by nearly 12,000 since the end of the Cold War – a trend that has resulted in fewer sources for critical components, decreased readiness, and increased risk to our undersea priorities. With the submarine industrial base expected to expand its material output by more than 200% in support of current submarine construction plans, it is more important than ever to support this fragile supplier base.

As the Government Accountability Office (GAO) noted in a recent report, one of the greatest risks to the Columbia program remains the fragility of the supplier base. Under the bipartisan leadership of your subcommittee, Congress has provided steady funding since 2018 to address this critical problem. The resources provided has supported over 130 suppliers in more than 26 states, allowing suppliers to expand capability and capacity in critical areas, developing alternative sourcing for sole-sourced critical components, and improving the readiness of suppliers.

With work now underway in earnest on this top-priority program, continuing to invest in the ability of the supplier and industrial base to fully support this work is critical. **To this end, we respectfully request that the FY2022 defense appropriations bill provide at least \$130 million to continue supplier development efforts.**

Thank you, as always, for your leadership in support of our undersea priorities.

Sincerely,