

Statement of Congresswoman Mary Gay Scanlon
House Committee on Armed Services Member Day
April 15, 2026

Chairman Rogers, Ranking Member Smith,

Thank you for the opportunity to advocate on behalf of my constituents in advance of the Fiscal Year 2027 National Defense Authorization Act. Today, I am here to request your support for the CH-47F Block II program.

First, I want to thank you both for your steadfast support of the Chinook. We have worked together to preserve funding for this program across seven consecutive NDAA's, and I greatly appreciate that partnership.

The Chinook is the Army's only heavy-lift helicopter, and it is proudly built in Ridley Park, Pennsylvania, which I have the honor to represent in Congress. The program has strong bipartisan support, recently demonstrated in a letter my colleagues and I sent to the Committee in March requesting your support for 12 Chinook aircraft for the Army in Fiscal Year 2027. It was signed by 18 Members representing districts across the country, including Mr. Norcross, Ms. Houlahan, Mr. Deluzio, and Mr. Conaway on this Committee.

The Chinook has been the workhorse of the U.S. Army and the Army National Guard, serving as one of our soldiers' most beloved assets. Whether rescuing soldiers from enemy fire in Afghanistan, dropping thousands of gallons of water to combat wildfires in California, or supporting search and rescue efforts hours after Hurricane Ian made landfall in Florida—the Chinook has saved lives and proven its capability time and again.

However, the Army is seeking, for the second time, to cancel this program. Despite recommitting to the Block II program in 2024, promising future year funding in its Fiscal Year 2026 budget, and asserting to Congress that the Army needs and values this program, there is no funding for the Block II program in the Fiscal Year 2027 budget request.

As you know, Congress has been through this before. In 2019, the Army first sought to delay the program, and thanks to your support, we added aircraft every year until the Army rebalanced its aviation portfolio and began requesting Chinooks in Fiscal Year 2025. Army aviators have received the first Block II helicopters and, by all accounts, are thrilled with the added capabilities.

The whiplash from the Army over the past seven years is a textbook case of the problems that plague procurement and have led to the deterioration of the defense industrial base. While I do not want to impugn the intentions of Army leadership, it is clear that they have cut Chinook funding so that they can request funding elsewhere in the budget, knowing that Congress will backstop the program.

The back and forth on whether to move forward with Block II, followed by meager budget requests, has kept the production line well below the minimum sustaining rate, causing multiple rounds of layoffs at the Ridley Park facility and increasing the Chinook's per-unit cost. Further, Block I aircraft continue to be retired with no plan for their replacement. If the Army does not extend the lifespan of the Block I, refuses to commit to the Block II program, and has no other serious plan to modernize heavy lift, we will soon approach a serious capability gap.

I applaud the Armed Services Committee's efforts to rebuild the nation's defense industrial base. The Army's decision to zero out the Block II program, combined with cuts to the Army's other aviation programs, would be a death knell for the vertical lift industrial base. Not only would the FY27 budget end this invaluable program for the Army and Guard, it would also threaten the livelihoods of 3,700 workers in my district and tens of thousands more at over 320 suppliers across the country. We cannot let this happen.

Finally, I must point out the glaringly irresponsible decision-making in this administration's budget request. The Department of Defense is asking Congress for \$1.5 trillion. The reconciliation bill that Senate Republicans are moving may add hundreds of billions in new defense spending. But somehow, with all this new spending, Army aviation is being decimated. The Army and Defense Department leadership are not prioritizing core assets and core capabilities. As we move forward with the NDAA this year, Congress must play a role in rebalancing the Department of Defense's misplaced priorities.

Thank you for your consideration of my request and I look forward to working with you to address these issues in the NDAA.