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BRIAN GARRETT, MINORITY STAFF DIRECTOR

January 17, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We, the undersigned, are writing to you as a bipartisan coalition that supported advancement of the recently enacted Fiscal Year (FY) 2024 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA). One of the most significant provisions of the new law are several authorities to enable execution of the trilateral AUKUS security agreement amongst the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom.

The intent of this historic enterprise, which your administration initiated, is aimed at preserving a free and open Indo-Pacific by rebalancing the deteriorating security environment in the region. In particular, the centerpiece of those authorities in the NDAA is authorization to sell three Virginia-class submarines to the Government of Australia as they recapitalize their Navy in the coming years. Now that AUKUS is codified, we are writing to express our conviction that the U.S. Navy and Congress maintain continued procurement of two Virginia-class submarines per year, as detailed in the Navy's FY2024 30-Year Shipbuilding Plan.

Our belief is based on the promising increase in U.S. submarine production tonnage in 2023. Part of this growth is due to investments from the Navy and Congress in workforce and supply chain development over the last five years, which requires continuous support to mature and stabilize the health of the industrial base. Even more importantly, this growth is dependent on the persistent two-per-year demand signal to the nationwide submarine industrial base that Congress has defended since 2011. That commitment has driven suppliers to make critical capital investments and expand capacity based on a predictable forecast in expected work. It has also driven metal trades workers, designers, and engineers to choose shipbuilding as promising careers in record numbers. Deviation from projected procurement rates in the FY2025 budget request would upend the faith of a steady procurement profile in the Future Years Defense Plan by our suppliers, as well as any plans for future capital investments in the supply chain.

In March 2023, the joint announcement of the AUKUS Optimal Pathway by the heads of government of the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom triggered a robust

discussion in Congress that generated significant support and increased international attention to the critical need for, and challenges facing, the Virginia-class program. The AUKUS partnership relies on our nation to sustain a consistent build rate for attack submarines required to fulfill our obligation to successfully transfer, via sale, Virginia-class submarines to Australia while meeting our own force structure requirements. It is imperative to maintain a steady two-per-year procurement rate to assure our partners in our ability to meet commitments and address concerns about our nation's undersea capabilities.

Simply put, now is not the time to insert instability in the supply chain with uncertainty in procurement rates. The FY2025 budget will come at a pivotal time for the Virginia-class submarine program and sustaining our unmatched edge in the undersea domain. Any deviation from the planned cadence of the construction and procurement of two submarines per year will reverberate both at home and abroad, with allies and competitors alike.

Thank you for your consideration of our views, and we look forward to supporting needed and steady investments in our attack submarine program.

Sincerely,



Mike Rogers
Chairman
House Armed Services Committee



Adam Smith
Ranking Member
House Armed Services Committee



Trent Kelly
Chairman
Seapower and Projection
Forces Subcommittee



Joe Courtney
Ranking Member
Seapower and Projection
Forces Subcommittee