The Honorable Rodney Frelinghuysen  
Chairman  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Peter Visclosky  
Ranking Member  
House Defense Appropriations Subcommittee  
H-405, The Capitol  
Washington, D.C. 20515

October 4, 2016

Gentlemen:

As you head into conference, we write in strong support of the F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and urge you to continue supporting increased production rates at this critical juncture for the program. The F-35 is essential for U.S. national security and that of our closest allies like Israel.

As you are aware, the F-35 is the nation’s only 5th Generation stealth aircraft currently in production. It is the backbone of future air superiority for all three US Services and many of our most important allies. The F-35’s advanced capabilities are critical to maintaining air superiority in future surface-to-air and air-to-air threat environments without sustaining significant losses. Events around the globe continue to demonstrate the urgent need for the F-35’s capabilities. The program is gaining momentum with the Marine Corps declaring initial operating capability (IOC) last year and the Air Force declaring IOC this summer. We believe it is essential for Congress to provide the funding necessary to continue increasing F-35 production at a rate sufficient to meet future threats and to reach full rate production of at least 120 US aircraft per year as quickly as possible.

Both the House and Senate Defense Appropriations bills support increasing the production rate for the F-35 program. The House bill added 11 F-35s (five F-35As, four F-35Cs and two F-35Bs) for all three Services to fulfill their unfunded requirements, while the Senate bill added four (two F-35Bs and two F-35Cs). Increasing the production rate is the single most important factor in reducing future aircraft unit costs. Additionally, significantly increasing production is critical to fielding F-35s in the numbers needed to meet the expected threats in the mid-2020s. Furthermore, the Senate bill added $100 million to significantly increase F-35A advance procurement to help the Air Force increase its ramp rate in Fiscal Year 2018. We strongly encourage the conferees to support the 11 aircraft added by the House and the $100 million in additional F-35A advance procurement included in the Senate bill.

Finally, we are concerned with the significant cuts to Follow-On-Modernization (FOM) included in the Senate bill. These cuts would delay critical FOM capability upgrades needed to ensure the F-35 stays ahead of increasing future threats. We urge the conferees to restore as much of this funding as possible.
Thank you for your continued steadfast support for the F-35 program and leadership on behalf of our nation’s armed forces.

Sincerely,

[Signatures of individuals]
Kay Granger
John Larson
Pete Aguilar
Rick Allen
Brad Ashford
Brian Babin
Joe Barton
Rob Bishop
Sanford Bishop
Robert Brady
Jim Bridenstine
Julia Brownley
Cheri Bustos
Andre Carson
Buddy Carter
Mike Coffman
Chris Collins
Doug Collins
Joe Courtney
Rosa DeLauro
Mike Doyle
Elizabeth Esty
Blake Farenthold
Paul Gosar
Tom Graves
Gene Green
Frank Quinta
Richard Hanna
Alicee Hastings
Jody Hice
Brian Higgins
Jim Himes
Duncan Hunter
Hank Johnson
Bill Johnson
Sam Johnson
Walter Jones
Peter King
Adam Kinzinger
Ann Kirkpatrick
Stephen Knight
Ann Kuster
Barry Loudermilk
Kenny Marchant
Jeff Miller
Patrick Murphy
Grace Napolitano
Richard Neal
Donald Norcross
Pete Olson
Bill Pascrell
Scott Peters
Ted Poe
Martha Roby
Tom Rooney
David Schweikert
Austin Scott
David Scott
Pete Sessions
Kyrsten Sinema
Scott Tipton
David Valadao
Marc Veasey
Filemon Vela
Jackie Walorski
Lynn Westmoreland
Roger Williams
Joe Wilson
Robert Wittman
Rob Woodall