

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 22, 2019

The Honorable Richard Shelby
Chairman
United States Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patrick Leahy
Vice Chairman
United States Senate Committee on
Appropriations
Room S-128, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Nita Lowey
Chairwoman
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kay Granger
Ranking Member
United States House of Representatives
Committee on Appropriations
H-307, The Capitol
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Shelby, Chairwoman Lowey, Vice Chairman Leahy, and Ranking Member Granger:

As you begin bipartisan conference negotiations on multiple Fiscal Year 2020 appropriations packages, we strongly urge you to support the Senate Committee on Appropriations-reported funding level of \$8 million in line 5, Research, Development, Test and Evaluation, Defense-Wide for submarine workforce development. This funding included in the Defense Appropriations package reported by the Senate Appropriations Committee would directly support critical workforce recruitment, training, and placement efforts that remain key pieces to sustaining submarine shipbuilding readiness.

Our undersea platforms and capabilities remain the best in the world. Their missions are supported by tens of thousands of civilian workers who contribute to the maintenance of our current submarine force, as well as the continued production of *Virginia*-class attack submarines and the future *Columbia*-class ballistic missile submarines. While our undersea force is unrivaled in capabilities, its future readiness depends on continued strong federal investment in the workforce development pipelines that ensure technical professionals keep our undersea force firmly ahead of our adversaries.

Over the next decade, the submarine shipbuilding industry must be prepared to hire at least 15,000 more skilled professionals to support the Navy's demands. The submarine shipbuilding industry in Connecticut and Rhode Island have already spearheaded efforts to work toward this goal by implementing successful workforce development pipelines, placing 2,250 new hires in just the last 3 years. Connecticut's Eastern CT Manufacturing Pipeline Initiative and Rhode Island's Pipeline to Manufacturing and Shipbuilding serve as national models for building a

qualified, motivated, and flexible workforce to achieve our nation's undersea needs. Both initiatives work in concert with local high schools, community colleges, trade schools, and American Job Centers to identify underemployed adults, veterans, and tech-savvy students to contribute to the submarine industry.

The results speak for themselves – in Connecticut, employers have seen a 50% improved retention rate, even with 78% of program graduates reporting no previous formal manufacturing background prior to entering the pipeline. Even more impressive, General Dynamics Electric Boat reported in January that more than 50% of their current workforce are millennials. Rhode Island's workforce development program has a 98% placement rate with its graduates retained at a rate 30% higher than those who join the industry via other means. These welders, pipefitters, electricians, machinists, shipfitters, and carpenters are tangible returns on investment in submarine workforce development. Both pipelines offer models that can be implemented across the defense industrial base to ensure the availability of skilled and ready workforce to meet the nation's needs.

To date, these programs have been initiated and sustained with a combination of federal, state, and private funds. However, the future demand will far outpace the level of funding available through existing U.S. Department of Labor sources, and in some cases those funds are tied to specific requirements that do not support hiring needs in our submarine industrial base. In order to expand and maintain a skilled workforce to support our Navy's undersea mission of countering adversaries around the globe, it is imperative that Congress make a sustained commitment to ensure that we remain one step ahead. This can be best accomplished in this year's Defense Appropriations bill by supporting the Senate Appropriations Committee-reported level of \$8 million in funding for the submarine workforce development pipeline in any final funding package.

We thank you for your continued commitment to the men and women in our undersea force and the professionals who support their global missions, and look forward to continuing to work with you on this important matter.

Sincerely,



JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress




SHELDON WHITEHOUSE
United States Senate



JACK REED
United States Senate



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY
United States Senate



JOHN B. LARSON
Member of Congress



JIM HIMES
Member of Congress




JAHANA HAYES
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ROSA L. DELAURO
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JAMES R. LANGEVIN
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DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress