

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

March 19, 2020

The Honorable Mark Esper  
Secretary of Defense  
1000 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, D.C. 20301

The Honorable Thomas B. Modly  
Acting Secretary of the Navy  
1000 Navy Pentagon, Room 4D652  
Washington, D.C. 20350

Dear Secretary Esper and Secretary Modly:

We are deeply concerned about the stability of the defense industrial base as the whole nation combats the current novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. We are equally worried about the health and safety risks to the industrial bases' primary asset – its skilled workforce - as defense companies struggle to support our nation's military while also managing the unique challenge we face today.

In Maine, workers at shipbuilder Bath Iron Works, as well as at other defense suppliers of all sizes, must now contend with significant health concerns at work while also arranging to care for their children who are now staying at home due to school closures. The strain and stress on our skilled workforce today are without recent precedent. Given these challenges, the Department of Defense and the Navy must immediately act to protect our nation's defense industrial base, including our nation's shipyards.

First, we ask that you work to mitigate cash flow and other financial burdens that contractors and subcontractors may face during this time of crisis. This includes providing clear guidance and relief from contract requirements that are uniquely impacted by COVID-19. Additionally, we ask that you take any actions possible to accelerate or advance payments or new contract obligations in order to provide immediate stability to the industrial base. If additional funding or new legal authorities are required to provide such assurances to industry, we stand ready to immediately assist the Department.

Finally, we ask that you clarify your planning and public guidance to ensure a stable industrial base while also ensuring the health and safety of the defense industrial base workforce. The safety of defense industry workers is paramount, and we are mindful that insufficiently mitigating the impact of COVID-19 now could lead to deeper impacts in later months or years if this pandemic continues for an extended period. An outbreak of COVID-19 at one of our

nation's shipyards or other large defense contractors could truly be devastating to our national defense. We ask you to work with and support industry to take all necessary protective actions.

Thank you for your attention to the important issue, and we look forward to your quick response.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins  
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.  
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress



Jared Golden  
Member of Congress