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February 10, 2021

The Honorable Lloyd J. Austin III
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, D.C. 20301

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I write to bring to your attention Section 732 of the recently enacted Fiscal Year 2021 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), which requires a report on the Department's pandemic preparedness. This section includes a requirement for DOD to review and update its inventory of medical supplies and equipment.

The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the need for rapid scalability of treatment containment solutions to address outbreak surges in both military and civilian treatment facilities. During the ongoing crisis, the nation saw a huge spike in demand for modular negative pressure mobile containment rooms that can offer a Military Treatment Facility (MTF) or hospital the capability to safely assess and treat patients with suspected COVID-19 symptoms. Provisions unanimously approved in the Senate's NDAA bill required a specific review of these systems.

One such possible solution is a company from Maine, STARC Systems. They have developed a commercially available off-the-shelf solution that can be stockpiled and rapidly deployed to address any surge in COVID-19 or other pandemics. I respectfully request that the Department's Section 732 review include an assessment of such negative air pressure room containment systems, consistent with all applicable laws and regulations.

I look forward to hearing what your review concludes on this matter.

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator

CC: Lieutenant General Ronald J. Place, M.D.
Director, Defense Health Agency