

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 18, 2021

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We were surprised and dismayed by recent media reports suggesting that the Department of Defense is only expected to request a single DDG-51 Flight III destroyer in the administration's budget for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022. This would be a reduction from the two DDG-51's previously projected for FY 2022 and a significant deviation from the current multiyear contract executed by the Navy and the two large surface combatant shipyards.

We are deeply concerned that such a reduction in expected procurement would harm the large surface combatant shipyard industrial base and its talented workforce, which have made great progress working to increase capacity and efficiency over the past several years. Since agreeing to a five-year multiyear procurement contract in 2018, industry had planned for a procurement rate of *at least* two ships per year through the next fiscal year. Stability and predictability are crucial to maintaining a healthy shipbuilding industrial base, which the Navy has identified as a "national security imperative that must be steadily supported, and grown, to maintain a skilled workforce."

We are also concerned that such an action would send the wrong message to China and hinder our Navy's ability to adequately deter Chinese military aggression and economic coercion in the future. As you observed in your first speech to Congress last month, the United States is "in a competition with China and other countries to win the 21st Century." If the United States is to safeguard its future, we must continue to make vital investments in our military and especially our Navy. China's Navy has already reached the 355-ship fleet goal set by our own military and the United States Congress, while our own fleet disappointingly lingers below 300 ships. Simply put, the United States is not keeping pace with China on shipbuilding, and an abrupt and short-sighted proposal to reduce planned large surface combatant procurement would hinder our Navy's ability to compete for years. Additionally, a reduction in DDG-51 procurement would deprive the Navy of essential anti-air and ballistic missile defense systems necessary to successfully operate and project power in the Indo-Pacific, where China has advanced anti-access and area denial capabilities.

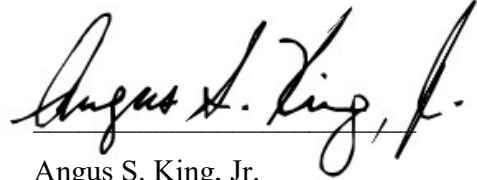
Congress has expressed its strong support for increased procurement of DDG-51's by including \$130 million in the FY 2021 defense bills to support the procurement of an additional DDG-51 in FY 2022, or *three* ships in total. As members of our respective chambers' Appropriations and Armed Services Committees, we will continue to advocate for increased procurement of DDG-51's and will oppose any proposal to procure only a single DDG-51 in the upcoming fiscal year.

If these media reports are accurate, we ask that you remedy this harmful reduction prior to the release of your final budget request. Thank you for your prompt attention to this pressing matter to our national security.

Sincerely,



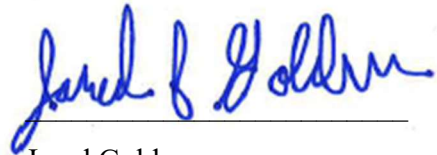
Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Jared Golden
Member of Congress