

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2023

The Honorable Jon Tester
Chairman
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Susan Collins
Ranking Member
Senate Appropriations Committee
Subcommittee on Defense
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Tester and Ranking Member Collins,

We write to respectfully request your continued support for the U.S. Department of Defense's (DOD) Humanitarian Demining Research and Development (HD R&D) Program, implemented by the U.S. Army. The HD R&D Program specializes in developing and testing innovative technologies to detect and clear landmines, unexploded ordnance (UXO), and improvised explosive devices (IEDs). These technologies increase the effectiveness, efficiency, and safety of demining operations for military and humanitarian use – saving lives and taxpayer dollars.

The HD R&D team designs technologies to respond to technical challenges in the field, drawing from new commercial technology, equipment currently in use by the DOD, and advanced sensor technology available only through other DOD R&D programs. They then trial prototypes in real field conditions through partnerships with the Department of State's (DOS) humanitarian demining programs. During field evaluations, operators provide feedback on the functionality and effectiveness of the equipment. This allows HD R&D to modify and improve the equipment and increase the U.S. technical capacity to respond to explosive threats.

HD R&D produces three specific outcomes. First, the field evaluation cycle collects enormous amounts of data helping to improve detection technologies used by our soldiers. Second, successfully trialed equipment is used to train and equip explosive disposal units of allied militaries. By equipping partner militaries to handle their own explosive threats, U.S. soldiers are more likely to remain out of harm's way. Third, HD R&D equipment amplifies taxpayer value for money by increasing the amount of clearance performed on DOS projects without increasing costs.

The HD R&D Program has a track record of success, having performed over 250 operational field evaluations in 43 countries since 1995. The program is responsible for developing advanced technology for the Handheld Standoff Mine Detection System, which combines metal detection with ground penetrating radar, the rotary mine comb, designed to efficiently excavate low metal content anti-vehicle mines, and TRAXX, built to cut through hard-to-see tripwires and lift mines from soil. Overall, HD R&D equipment has been used to clear more than 25,300 acres of land, and to destroy more than 400,000 mines and UXO.

As you know, HD R&D receives funding from **Research, Development, Test & Evaluation, Army / Program Element 0603920A**.

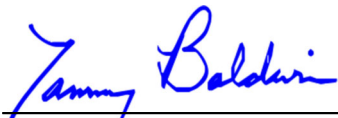
Due to strong bipartisan support, the program received \$21 million in Fiscal Year 2023. However, this program has a long list of unfunded projects it is waiting to trial, including

counter-IED machines in Iraq and Libya, and amphibious excavators in Sri Lanka. The HD R&D program also requires resources to address the heavy contamination and varied threat types across Ukraine, where the program is beginning to evaluate advanced attachments to currently utilized equipment and U.S.-manufactured remote demining robots.

We urge the committee to support funding at a level of \$23 million in Fiscal Year 2024 for HD R&D. This additional funding will improve the ability of U.S. soldiers and our allies' ability to safely detect and clear landmines, UXO, and IEDs, as well as protect civilian lives. This funding is especially important as new conflicts uncover new threats in areas like the Ukraine, the Middle East, and Libya.

We appreciate your consideration and look forward to working with you throughout the appropriations process to save many military and civilian lives.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



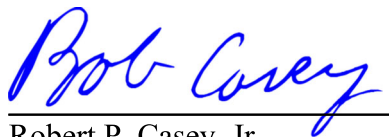
Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator



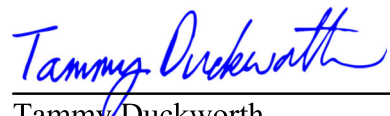
Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



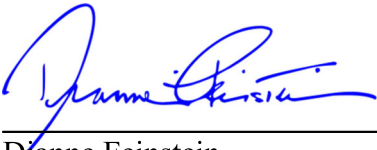
Tina Smith
United States Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator




Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



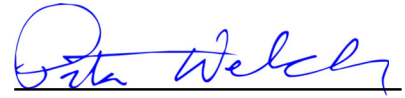
Michael F. Bennet
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Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



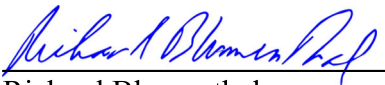
Peter Welch
United States Senator



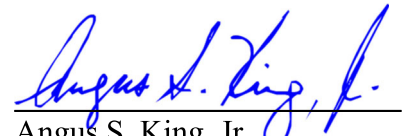
Catherine Cortez Masto
United States Senator



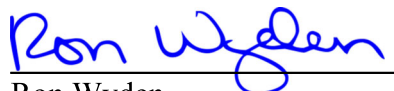
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Ron Wyden
United States Senator



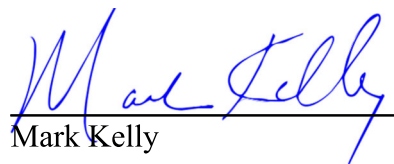
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Alex Padilla
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Raphael Warnock
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Mark Kelly
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator