To all U.S. Senators and Representatives,

We write to you with grave concern regarding President Biden’s request of more than $813,000,000,000 in Pentagon spending as part of the federal budget for fiscal year 2023. This funding request, if approved by Congress, will be the highest level of defense funding sought in history. As women state legislators who believe deeply in the necessity of demilitarizing U.S. foreign and domestic policy, we ask that you reject the urge to increase the exorbitant Pentagon budget and boost spending for domestic investments that will help low and middle-income families become economically sound.

We have been watching the somber tragedy unfolding in Ukraine, and condemn, in the strongest terms, Russia’s violent and unprovoked attacks on the Ukrainian people. We grieve with the people of Ukraine and sympathize with the pain and uncertainty that they face. The gross reach for power on display by President Vladimir Putin requires a response, and we firmly support the use of non-military actions, including sharp multilateral sanctions, that increase the cost of war to Russia and open space for peace negotiations.

At the same time, Russia’s war in Ukraine does not necessitate additional U.S. military spending. We already have extraordinary military capabilities in Europe, and our European allies are rapidly changing their own military policies in response to the war. Moreover, the U.S. has contributed more than $1 billion in security assistance to Ukraine in the past year, and Congress has provided massive support to Ukraine directly this year including a $13.6 billion aid package in March and an additional $40 billion in a second supplemental spending package in late May.

We cannot ignore the many people in our own country who are struggling to make ends meet. We are heartened by your stated commitments to addressing systemic and racial inequalities as we believe that policy solutions that center poor and low-income people create a more equitable, just, and effective society for everyone. And while we were also disappointed in last year’s Pentagon budget request, we were pleased with last year’s overall budget request that increased nondefense spending by 16 percent, allowing for much needed investments in our states.

As our country continues to climb out of the economic downturn brought on by the coronavirus pandemic, it is imperative to reduce Pentagon spending and invest taxpayer dollars in programs that will help families. The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) rightly pointed out that the nation has severely underinvested in core public services over the past 10 years, the consequences of which we are seeing today: reductions in food and nutrition assistance left many families struggling to afford adequate food and cutbacks in housing assistance left many individuals and families struggling to afford adequate housing.

Militarism and war have an impact on the whole world, with a disproportionate effect on poor and low-income families. With more resources for domestic priorities, we could provide critical services for poor and low-income families such as affordable housing, education, and child care.

We must start by setting the example that having a strong national security does not mean spending billions of dollars on weapons and destruction, but rather investments in our people and social infrastructure are key to our nation’s strength, security, and long-lasting prosperity.
Sincerely,

The undersigned state legislators:

Arkansas Representative Denise Garner
Colorado Representative Naquetta Ricks
Connecticut Representative Robyn Porter
Connecticut Senator Marilyn Moore
Georgia Senator Nan Grogan Orrock
Georgia Senator Kim Jackson
Georgia Representative Park Cannon
Georgia Representative Becky Evans
Georgia Representative Kim Schofield
Hawaii Representative Amy Perruso
Iowa Representative Marti Anderson
Illinois Representative Robyn Gabel
Illinois Representative Joyce Mason
Kansas Senator Pat Pettey
Kansas Representative Sydney Carlin
Kansas Representative Cheryl Helmer
Massachusetts Senator Patricia Jehlen
Massachusetts Representative Natalie Higgins
Massachusetts Representative Lindsay Sabadosa
Maryland Delegate Sheila Ruth
Maine Representative Valli Geiger
Maine Representative Amy Roeder
Maine Representative Suzanne Salisbury
Maine Representative Maureen Terry
Maine Representative Lynne Williams
Minnesota Senator Jen McEwen
Missouri Representative Ingrid Burnett
Montana Representative Mary Ann Dunwell
Montana Representative Andrea Olsen
North Dakota Representative Mary Schneider
New Mexico Senator Mimi Stewart
Rhode Island Senator Meghan Kallman
South Carolina Representative Annie McDaniel
Utah Representative Elizabeth Weight
Virginia Senator Kaye Kory
Vermont Representative Gabrielle Stebbins
Vermont Representative Tiffany Bluemle
Vermont Representative Jessica Brumsted
Vermont Representative Elizabeth Burrows
Vermont Representative Michelle Bos-Lun
Vermont Representative Erin Brady
Vermont Representative Sara Coffey

Women Legislators’ Lobby
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