United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

February 3, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

With grave concern over escalating Russian aggression in Ukraine, we urge the U.S. and NATO to rapidly increase military assistance to Ukraine to allow it to defend its sovereign borders. Russia's affront to established international norms is a direct threat to decades of established European security architecture and the democratic aspirations of the Ukrainian people. Russian President Putin's aggression must not be allowed to succeed. We believe it is time to increase military assistance to Ukraine and urge the U.S. and NATO to move quickly.

Despite the welcome imposition of U.S. and EU sanctions and mounting international isolation, Putin appears willing to gamble his country's economy and world standing to further his blatant military invasion of another nation. That he is willing to undertake such a selfish pursuit at the cost of the Russian people's freedoms, aspirations, and talents is only the more tragic. Such a dangerous international bully will only stand down when faced with credible resistance.

In the last few weeks, Russia and its armed proxies in eastern Ukraine have launched a new and grisly military offensive, walked away from peace talks, and scorned the international community. The Donestk Airport has been destroyed, more civilians continue to be killed or displaced, and new attacks have been launched against towns like Mariupol and Debaltseve. Meanwhile, Russian agents and propaganda outlets continue to stoke tensions in Moldova, Georgia, and the Baltics, and Russian ships and aircraft have taken provocative and dangerous actions around the world. Former NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen said it clearly last year, "Despite Moscow's hollow denials, it is now clear that Russian troops and equipment have illegally crossed the border into eastern and south-eastern Ukraine. This is not an isolated action, but part of a dangerous pattern over many months to destabilize Ukraine as a sovereign nation." As Putin's pattern of aggression and provocation has only increased since then, a change in our response is also needed.

Working with our NATO allies, the United States must implement a comprehensive strategy to support Ukraine, deter Russian aggression, and help maintain stability in the region. Unfortunately, sanctions alone are unlikely to deter Putin. As such, Ukraine needs an immediate infusion of effective defensive military equipment and financial aid to thwart Putin's naked aggression. Defensive military assistance such as anti-tank weapons, counter-battery radars, armored Humvees, and increased training are all critical to ensuring Ukraine has the capabilities to defend its territory and its citizens.

As Ukrainian Finance Minister Natalie Jaresko recently said, "Putin fears a Ukraine that demands to live and wants to live and insists on living on European values – with a robust civil society and freedom of speech and relation [and] with a system of values the Ukrainian people have chosen and laid down their lives for." We must help her and her fellow Ukrainians succeed. The bipartisan Ukraine Freedom Support Act, which passed the Congress in December, authorized tighter sanctions and such military equipment. We urge you to take such steps without delay.

Sincerely,

Senator Richard J. Durbin

Senator Rob Portman

Senator Sherrod Brown

Senator Chris Murphy

Senator John Barrasso

Senator Jeanne Shaheen

Senator Richard Blumenthal

Senator Barbara Boxer

Senator John McCain

Senator Bill Nelson

Senator Kelly Ayotte

Senator Marco Rubio

Senator Benjamin L. Cardin

Senator Mark Kirk

Senator Joe Donnelly