

Congress of the United States  
Washington, DC 20515

June 17, 2026

The Honorable Pete Hegseth  
Secretary  
U.S. Department of Defense  
1400 Defense Pentagon  
Washington, DC 20301-1400

Dear Secretary Hegseth:

The non-partisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) recently estimated that the “Golden Dome” program could cost American taxpayers \$1.2 trillion, far higher than your official cost projection, and that it would deliver much less capability than advertised. The Department of Defense (DOD) responded that CBO’s estimate does not reflect the actual system under construction, in part because DOD has refused to tell CBO or the American public what Golden Dome will look like. This is unacceptable. Before you spend one more taxpayer dollar on Golden Dome, DOD must share its plans and goals for the system.

CBO’s May 12, 2026 report found that Golden Dome could cost American taxpayers \$1.2 trillion over 20 years.<sup>1</sup> That figure is much higher than your official cost projection of \$185 billion.<sup>2</sup> On May 14, 2026, Golden Dome czar General Michael Guetlein said that CBO’s estimate does not reflect the current architecture of the program: “They’re not estimating what we’re building.”<sup>3</sup> If that is the case, it is because DOD has not shared its current Golden Dome architecture with CBO or the public. According to CBO, “details about what and how many systems will be deployed—the ‘objective architecture’—have not been released, making it impossible to estimate the long-term cost of the [Golden Dome] system being contemplated by DOD.”<sup>4</sup>

There is no reasonable justification for keeping the mission and number of interceptors for Golden Dome secret. On May 14, General Guetlein also said that DOD has “not been putting

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<sup>1</sup> *Potential Costs of a National Missile Defense System*, Congressional Budget Office (May 2026), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62422>.

<sup>2</sup> Mike Stone, *US budget watchdog estimates Golden Dome will cost \$1.2 trillion, dwarfing Pentagon’s \$185 billion estimate*, Reuters (May 12, 2026), <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/us-budget-watchdog-estimates-golden-dome-will-cost-12-trillion-well-above-2026-05-12/>.

<sup>3</sup> Sandra Erwin, *Golden Dome chief pushes back on \$1.2 trillion CBO estimate*, Space News (May 14, 2026), <https://spacenews.com/golden-dome-chief-pushes-back-on-1-2-trillion-cbo-estimate/>.

<sup>4</sup> *Potential Costs of a National Missile Defense System*, Congressional Budget Office (May 2026), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62422>.

a lot of information out in the public on exactly what [it is] doing, because the intelligence threat is so high.” It is one thing to withhold design details or performance specifications of certain systems, but it is quite another to withhold the entire system architecture that you expect Congress to approve and fund. Congress and the American public have a right to know what they are paying for.

Transparency is particularly important when it appears, as it does here, that the system’s ultimate capability will fall far short of the original promises. On May 20, 2025, President Trump said that, with Golden Dome, “we will truly be completing the job that President Reagan started 40 years ago, forever ending the missile threat to the American homeland.”<sup>5</sup> The Trump administration promised that Golden Dome would counter missile attacks against the United States from “any foe,” presumably including Russia and China. Both Russia and China, often referred to as “peer or near-peer adversaries,” can launch attacks against the United States involving *hundreds* of long-range missiles.

Notably, the \$1.2 trillion system envisioned by CBO would include Space-Based Interceptors (SBIs) to engage an attack of just *10* incoming missiles. A larger attack of 50, 100 or more missiles would soundly defeat the system which, according to CBO, “could be overwhelmed by a full-scale attack mounted by a peer or near-peer adversary.”<sup>6</sup> The system could be expanded to increase its theoretical capability, but only at great expense. According to CBO: “increasing the number of SBIs by a factor of five to bolster capacity would push up the 20-year cost of the constellation by about a factor of four, to about \$3 trillion.”<sup>7</sup> This follows analysis by the American Enterprise Institute which suggested the price tag for Golden Dome could be as much as \$3.6 trillion.

Simply put, there is no way that a Golden Dome system that costs \$185 billion could possibly live up to the promise of “forever ending the missile threat to the American homeland.” According to CBO’s calculations, even a system that would cost \$3 trillion would not meet that ambitious goal, which would need to be able to engage hundreds of missiles. If the Administration has not scaled back its goals for the system, the current official price tag is woefully unrealistic.

Given the tremendous potential costs of a Golden Dome system, and the fallacy that it could shield the United States from a significant missile attack, the American people deserve answers. Please respond to the following questions in writing by June 30, 2026:

1. What is the intended purpose of Golden Dome? How many missiles (and of what types) is it being designed to intercept? What system architecture will be used?
2. How does the Administration plan to spend the proposed \$185 billion on Golden Dome?
3. What is your 20-year estimated cost of Golden Dome?

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<sup>5</sup> Chris Sanders & Mike Stone, *What Is the Golden Dome Missile Defense Shield?* Reuters (Aug. 14, 2025), <https://www.reuters.com/business/aerospace-defense/what-is-golden-dome-missile-defense-shield-2025-05-21/>.

<sup>6</sup> *Potential Costs of a National Missile Defense System*, Congressional Budget Office (May 2026), <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/62422>.

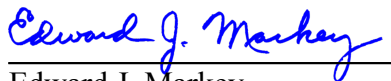
<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

4. How does the Administration plan to deal with known and anticipated countermeasures to space- and ground-based missile defense, including nuclear detonations in space?
5. What aspects of the system would be based in space?
6. Will the Administration propose a third missile defense interceptor site on the East Coast?
7. How does the Pentagon plan to meet requirements for developmental and operational testing of the elements of the proposed system, given the very short timeline for deployment? Does the Administration plan to circumvent acquisition best practices to meet a political timeline? How will planned staffing reductions in DOD's Office of Operational Test and Evaluation affect the testing of Golden Dome?
8. How does the Administration expect China and Russia to react to Golden Dome? How does the Administration plan to reconcile its arms control goals with these reactions?
9. What parts of your plans for Golden Dome do you expect to keep secret and what parts will you release to the public?

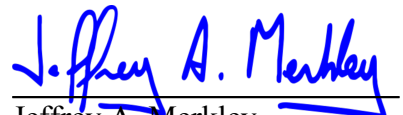
As some of us wrote to you last year, the Trump administration's plans for Golden Dome could make it prohibitively expensive, operationally ineffective, massively corrupt, and detrimental to U.S. and global security by igniting a nuclear arms race with Russia and China.<sup>8</sup> We are concerned that Golden Dome will be much more effective at wasting taxpayer dollars than countering incoming missiles. We urge you to halt this dangerous plan and return to the more limited missile defense policies that have earned bipartisan support in the past.

Thank you in advance for your attention to this important matter of U.S. and global security.

Sincerely,



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

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<sup>8</sup> Letter from Sen. Edward J. Markey, et al., to Pete Hegseth, U.S. Secretary of Defense (July 8, 2025), [https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/golden\\_dome\\_letter.pdf](https://www.markey.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/golden_dome_letter.pdf).



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



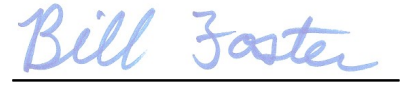
Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



Bill Foster  
Member of Congress