United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 25, 2009

The Honorable Byron L. Dorgan,
Chairman
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Energy and Water Development
186 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Robert F. Bennett,
Ranking Member
Appropriations Subcommittee on
Energy and Water Development
186 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Dorgan and Ranking Member Bennett:

We write in support of maintaining the existing funding level for the federal hydrogen and fuel cell research and development budget. To maintain our nation's leadership role in advanced vehicle technologies, we should maintain and support the advances our nation has won in hydrogen and hydrogen fuel cell research.

The Department of Energy's long-term research and development plan for hydrogen and fuel cells is subject to independent assessments of the National Academies and the Hydrogen Technical Advisory Committee. According to their assessments, fuel cell technology is not only meeting and exceeding its intermediate milestones, but it is also on track to achieve commercial viability by 2015.

As the country considers technology pathways to achieve aggressive goals for petroleum and greenhouse gas reductions, we believe it is important to develop diverse technology options. The projected progress of all of the advanced vehicle efforts contains technological uncertainties that can be minimized with a robust portfolio approach.

Other countries understand this approach and several are aggressively pursuing a technology portfolio that includes hydrogen and fuel cells. Japan and Germany are two examples that are making plans for early commercialization in the 2015 timeframe. While making critical investments in electrification and biofuels, the Department of Energy also needs to continue to work with industry partners on a zero-petroleum fuel cell solution.

The United States is currently among the leaders in automotive fuel cell technology. By maintaining funding for this program, we can build on this position and develop hydrogen and fuel cells on the same timeline as competing nations. The alternative is to, once again, abandon a promising technology and allow our work to be the foundation of our competitors' success.

The FY 2009 appropriation for the hydrogen and fuel cell research and development program was $200.5 million. We urge you to invest in our country's ability to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, create new U.S. jobs, and compete internationally in energy and transportation technology by maintaining this program at the FY 2009 level.

Sincerely,

Debbie Stabenow

Orrin G. Hatch

Ron Wyden

Robert P. Casey Jr.

Kirsten E. Gillibrand

Charles E. Schumer

Ted Kaufman

Carl Levin

Dianne Feinstein

Joseph I. Lieberman

Sherrod Brown

Christopher J. Dodd

Lindsey O. Graham

Barbara Boxer

Tom Carper

Daniel K. Akaka

Michael F. Bennet