



August 28, 2020

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer  
 Office of the U.S. Trade Representative  
 Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

On behalf of the undersigned organizations — representing the full spectrum of the textile, apparel, and footwear industry, as well as the broader business community — we urge you to convey your support to Congress to renew the Caribbean Basin Trade Partnership Act (CBTPA) as soon as possible. CBTPA, which celebrated its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary on May 18, is set to expire on September 30, 2020 — just over a month from now.

Since its inception in 2000, CBTPA has become an important element of the effort to develop and facilitate trade within the Caribbean Basin region, most notably with Haiti. Overall, CBTPA is structured in a fashion that reasonably balances the interests of U.S. textile manufacturers with those of textile and apparel manufacturers in the region. The CBTPA requires the use of U.S. or CBTPA-regional yarns and fabrics, which means Haiti, as the main country still participating in the CBTPA, has become an important export market for U.S. textiles.

Along with the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) Act, and the Haiti Economic Lift Program (HELP) Act, the CBTPA now increases U.S. exports to strategic allies in the Caribbean Basin. Not only have these programs supported numerous U.S. textile, apparel, and footwear jobs, but they have also supported economic development in the region, advancing key U.S. foreign, security, and immigration policy goals.

Specifically, the CBTPA continues to play a direct and critical role in advancing the industry partnership that currently exists between the United States and Haiti. In 2019, 100 percent (by volume) of apparel that was imported into the United States under the CBTPA was imported from Haiti. And U.S. apparel imports from Haiti continue to grow. In fact,

total U.S. garment imports from Haiti grew 13.4% in 2019. Because the rules of origin for these programs generally require the use of U.S. fabrics and yarns, these U.S. garment imports incorporate prior U.S. textile exports.

Those benefits are now threatened because of questions surrounding the renewal of the CBTPA. These concerns come on top of the considerable pain, costs, and uncertainty the industry is already trying to manage as a result of COVID-19 and the accompanying economic crisis. Orders have already been placed for goods that will arrive well after September 30. Companies must increasingly assume that these orders will be fully dutiable — even if using U.S. inputs — putting our Haitian customers and partners, and our U.S. textile manufacturers and exporters at a disadvantage.

The CBTPA offers a great opportunity for companies looking to diversify their supply chains close to home, but time is running out for this critical program. We urge you to convey support to Congress to renew this program — which has bipartisan, bicameral support — as soon as possible.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Accessories Council

American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)

Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)

Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America (FDRA)

INDA, Association of the Nonwoven Fabrics Industry

National Retail Federation (NRF)

North American Association of Uniform Manufacturers and Distributors

Outdoor Industry Association (OIA)

Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)

Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA)

Travel Goods Association (TGA)

United States Fashion Industry Association (USFIA)

U.S. Chamber of Commerce