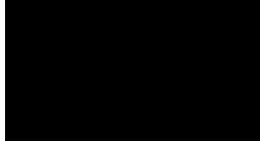
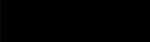


**COMMITTEE ON WAYS AND MEANS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515**

November 5, 2021



Dear 

We are deeply disheartened by the acute humanitarian crisis and recent tragedies that have fallen upon Haiti in recent months. Between the ongoing political turmoil and the recent earthquake, we hope for full recovery and healing for the people directly affected. Historic ties that bond the United States and Haiti are the foundation of our committee's commitment to aid the Haitian people. As a result, we will continue to support Haitians as they work to rebuild and recover. Our trade engagement with Haiti seeks to promote Haiti's inclusive and equitable economic development, and also address transnational economic practices that may undermine or hinder Haiti's progress, including recent supply chain practices that predated the country's most recent adversities.

Today, we write you as supporters of United States trade programs with Haiti concerning documented reports of workers in the Haitian garment industry being denied health care services where employers failed to make full and timely health insurance payments on behalf of employees. We write to you because your companies benefit from those trade programs and rely on Haitian employers and garment workers to create your products, and thus, you have a vested interest in and unique opportunity to help improve and strengthen U.S.-Haiti garment supply chains. As you know, U.S. trade policies have increasingly prioritized collaboration across supply chains to improve labor standards.¹

Independent reports have revealed that 84 percent of factories have failed to comply with health insurance and social security contribution requirements, including the requirement to send deductions from employee wages to the Haitian respective agencies between October 2019

¹ For example, the 2008 HOPE II legislation created the new Technical Assistance Improvement and Compliance Needs Assessment and Remediation (TAICNAR) program, also known as the International Labor Organization's Better Work Haiti (BWH) program, to engage Haitian producers, workers, and U.S. importers to help meet core ILO labor standards, Haitian labor laws, and acceptable conditions of work with respect to minimum wages, hours of work, and occupational safety and health. HOPE II also requires participation in the BWH program in order for importer firms to access the program's tariff benefits.

and September 2020, as required by Haitian law.² The House Ways and Means Subcommittee on Trade received testimony on September 10, 2020, that such practices in the Haitian garment industry are “particularly egregious.”³

According to labor union advocates, at least two workers died in 2020 after they were denied emergency medical care they should have been entitled to because their employers had previously deducted health insurance contributions from their individual earnings.⁴ One worker, Sandra René, a 30-year-old woman, more than six months pregnant with her first child, was denied treatment because the employer failed to make proper payments to the government, despite her employer deducting the employee portion for health insurance contributions from her wages during her 9 years of prior employment. Reportedly, unable to afford the more than USD \$600 cost of care that was due in full prior to required treatment, Sandra and her unborn child died days later.⁵ Another worker, Liunel Pierre, reportedly died after he was denied critical dialysis treatment for similar accounting reasons.⁶ Since workers in Haiti already face exposure to COVID-19 and security threats due to civil unrest, increased crime, and political instability, access to earned benefits should be the least of their worries.

These kinds of reported employer practices undermine our shared efforts to promote the economic and public welfare of working people in Haiti and in the United States through fair business transactions, foreign investments, and policymaking. To help address these issues we respectfully request your responses to the questions below by December 1, 2021:

1. Have your supplier factories failed to pay healthcare or social security contributions for their employees in the last two years? If so, please describe how the issue was addressed or remedied.
2. Is your company working to ensure that your supplier factories in Haiti comply with healthcare and social security requirements? If so, how?

We recognize individual factories are responsible for complying with the laws and upholding labor agreements. However, your leadership and attention to this matter within your supply chain will help promote transparency and respect for the rule of law across the sector. It

² ILO BWH has reported high rates of factory failure to comply with required health care and social security payments over the last decade. See <https://www.solidaritycenter.org/haiti-garment-workers-negotiate-landmark-health-payment/> and ILO Better Work Haiti Annual and Biannual Compliance Synthesis Reports at www.betterwork.org/bwh-resources-pubs.

³ Testimony of Lauren L. Stewart, Americas Regional Program Director at the Solidarity Center, Subcommittee on Trade of the Committee on Ways and Means, September 10, 2020.

⁴ The Failure of Factories in Haiti to Pay Legally Required Health Benefits, the Related Deaths of Two Workers at Facilities Making Collegiate Apparel, and the Status of Remedial Action, Worker Rights Consortium, June 17, 2021, https://www.workersrights.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/06/WRC-Report-on-Palm-and-SISA_June-2021.pdf.

⁵ The cost of care was equivalent to 140 days of work at the minimum wage rate. Most garment workers do not have private insurance and must rely on public health services.

⁶ <http://www.industrial-union.org/haitis-garment-workers-fighting-for-their-livelihood>.

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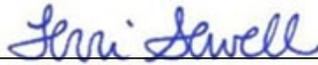
is imperative that we work together to remedy any labor violations and ensure that factories are complying in the future. Your assistance is critical to that endeavor.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and your continued investment in the Haitian people and their economy. We look forward to receiving a response to our inquiry by December 1, 2021.

Sincerely,



The Honorable Bill Pascrell, Jr.



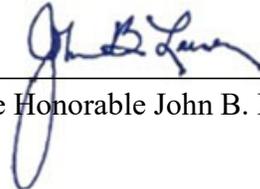
The Honorable Terri Sewell



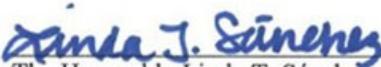
The Honorable Earl Blumenauer



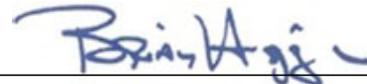
The Honorable Mike Thompson



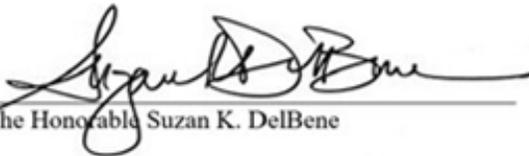
The Honorable John B. Larson



The Honorable Linda T. Sánchez



The Honorable Brian Higgins



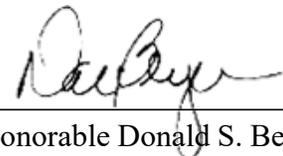
The Honorable Suzan K. DelBene



The Honorable Judy Chu



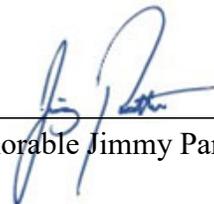
The Honorable Gwen Moore



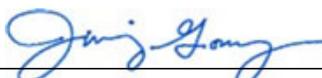
The Honorable Donald S. Beyer



The Honorable Dwight Evans



The Honorable Jimmy Panetta



The Honorable Jimmy Gomez



The Honorable Stacey Plaskett