

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2014

The Honorable Michael Froman
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Ambassador Froman,

In May, we wrote to you with 149 of our colleagues calling on you not to pursue the same approach to labor rights in free trade agreements that has failed in past pacts. In response, you noted that our free trade partners have made efforts to improve their labor conditions and that the proposed Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) “allows the United States to take a leading role in shaping global trade policy by raising standards, allowing us to make progress toward a global trading system that reflects our core values.” However, a recent report by the Labor Department’s Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) disputes that assertion, and we have no indication that U.S. negotiators are taking a new approach to ensure labor rights are protected.

ILAB’s annual *List of Goods Produced by Child Labor or Forced Labor* report sheds light on some of the worst forms of labor abuses worldwide, and highlights the countries that produce goods using child and forced labor. Vietnam, Mexico, Peru, and Malaysia, one-third of the nations included in the TPP, were all cited for labor abuses in the report. We are following up with you because we believe it is important that you take action to ensure that real, meaningfully enforceable labor protections are in the TPP, and we request a briefing for Members of Congress to better understand what specific new measures are being developed and what new assurances are being put in place during TPP negotiations.

The report has particularly troubling findings on several TPP member nations. Only four countries globally are cited for forced and child labor in their apparel sector, including Vietnam. Over the course of the last year of TPP negotiations, electronics products from Malaysia were added to the list of goods produced through forced labor. Malaysia is one of only seven countries in which the Labor Department found worsening child or forced labor conditions in 2014. In addition, the report identified child labor violations in eleven sectors in Mexico— the fifth-broadest usage of child labor cited in the report. By comparison, China uses child labor in six sectors.

Free trade agreements with nations that violate international child labor and forced labor standards not only undermine our moral authority, but they also capitalize on the lack of oversight and regulation in developing nations. Here in this country, we have fought hard to

protect our workers, yet, our free trade policy undermines those protections by sending American jobs to countries that do not play by the rules.

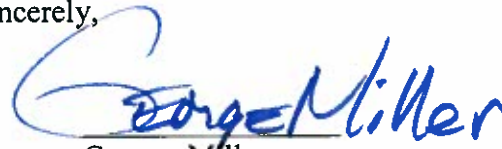
The report reveals that in many parts of the world, child labor and forced labor violations are still common, despite provisions in our free trade agreements that are supposed to end such practices. Our international child labor and forced labor standards serve to not only protect human dignity, but also are essential for ensuring human rights are not violated. The opportunity to get an education and a good paying job are not only American dreams, but global dreams. We have a responsibility to ensure that under no circumstances is it acceptable for children to work in sweatshops to produce the goods we consume. We can and must do better.

It is critically important that we make stronger efforts to end these worker abuses, with the Administration's ongoing push for trade promotion authority, these ongoing issues must first be addressed.

Sincerely,



Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress



George Miller
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Loretta Sanchez
Member of Congress