



March 11, 2025

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor

Subject: Importance of Bureau of International Labor Affairs to the U.S. Apparel, Footwear, & Accessories Industry

Secretary Chavez-DeReemer:

The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) and the Fair Labor Association (FLA), on behalf of the hundreds of American brands and retailers we represent, congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of Labor. We also congratulate you on your strong and demonstrated commitment to protecting and promoting American workers. As part of your longstanding dedication to protecting American workers, we urge you to fully preserve and promote the Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) and its programs to defend workers.

While 97% of all clothes, shoes, and accessories sold in the United States are imported, our industry directly employs 3.5 million American workers in good-paying jobs, in design, R&D, compliance, logistics, marketing, retail, and, yes, manufacturing. We rely on the essential work of ILAB, whose purpose is to work globally to ensure a level playing field for American workers. ILAB's work reflects the values of the American people as it furthers the interest of American workers and American businesses.

ILAB works to build institutions in countries around the world so that they can effectively protect their workers, raising labor standards, including eliminating child labor and forced labor and promoting freedom of association and collective bargaining. ILAB provides training to workers so they know their rights and how to defend them. ILAB deploys labor attachés to U.S. embassies in key countries to provide real time intelligence, contacts, and solutions to promote and protect workers. ILAB enforces the labor provisions in trade agreements to ensure a level playing field for American workers. And finally, ILAB is a critical funder and manager of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Better Work program, which establishes strong labor enforcement and transparency in key countries around the world.

ILAB's partnership with our industry helps protect and promote workers' rights, freedom of association, and collective bargaining in every country from which we source, which in turn provides a stable business environment for American businesses, protects our 3.5 million American workers, levels the playing field for American manufacturers and American workers, and, through ILAB's extensive work under the U.S./Mexico/Canada Agreement (USMCA) and the U.S./Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR), promotes the success of these agreements, which require the use of U.S.-grown cotton and U.S.-made textiles.

Therefore, we again urge you to preserve, protect, and promote the Bureau of International Labor Affairs and its programs. ILAB is a good friend and important partner to both American workers and American business, as demonstrated by the strong support ILAB receives from both the AFL-CIO and American industry.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter. Please contact Nate Herman at nherman@aafaglobal.org or Shelly Han at shan@fairlabor.org if you have any questions or would like additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Lamar". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Steve Lamar
President & CEO
American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Vockrodt". The signature is cursive and somewhat compact.

Jeff Vockrodt
President and CEO
Fair Labor Association (FLA)