March 31, 2025

The Honorable Jamieson Greer
U.S. Trade Representative
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative

Subject: Importance of Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) to Fighting Unfair Trade

Ambassador Greer:

The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) and the Fair Labor Association (FLA), on behalf of the hundreds of American brands and retailers and the millions of American workers we represent, congratulate you on your confirmation as U.S. Trade Representative. We are writing to urge you to express strong support for the U.S. Department of Labor's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB), a crucial ally in your longstanding commitment to fight unfair trade and level the playing field for American businesses and American 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 manufacturing. We rely on the essential work of ILAB, whose purpose is to put America First by furthering the interests of American workers and American businesses.

American workers and American businesses should not have to face unfair competition, in a race to the bottom, from labor markets whose profitability depends on forced labor or other labor abuses such as unsafe workplaces and blocking workers' freedom of association.

ILAB grants, technical assistance, and support build institutions in countries around the world so that they can effectively protect their workers, raising labor standards and eliminating opportunities for less scrupulous foreign businesses to profit from labor abuses while American businesses and workers play by the rules. We, as American businesses, rely heavily on ILAB's work to promote a fair global playing field for American workers and businesses. ILAB does this by enforcing the worker rights commitments of America's trading partners and employing technical assistance and support to combat forced labor, including child labor and human trafficking, and other labor abuses.

ILAB, directly and through its grants and technical assistance, provides training to workers to help educate them on their rights and root out forced labor, including ILAB-funded programs in Bangladesh, Vietnam, and Uzbekistan and ILAB's RISE program. ILAB-funded programs ensure that Mexico and Central American countries have the capability and capacity to comply with the labor provisions in the historic U.S.-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USCMA), negotiated by President Trump, and the U.S./Central America-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement (CAFTA-DR). Further, these programs help provide good jobs in these regions, which can discourage migration to the U.S. 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 Vietnam, Bangladesh, Cambodia, Indonesia, Jordan (which is required by the U.S./Jordan FTA), and Haiti (which is required by the Haiti HOPE/HELP legislation).

If ILAB and its programs are not funded, it will lead to more unfair trade for American businesses and American workers. This will put American workers and American businesses last, leading to unfair competition with countries and foreign businesses that are not held to the same laws and standards for labor abuses, forced labor, human trafficking, and child labor.

Therefore, we urge you to voice your support for preserving, protecting, and promoting the Bureau of International Labor Affairs, its technical assistance, and its programs as a key ally in USTR's efforts to fight unfair trade.

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,

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

Jeff Vockrodt
President and CEO
Fair Labor Association (FLA)