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May 13, 2020

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer  
Ambassador  
Office of the United States Trade Representative  
600 17<sup>th</sup> Street, Northwest  
Washington, D.C. 20006

Re: Preserve tariffs on COVID supplies to bolster US productive capacity

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

We appreciate your efforts and work to reduce the US trade deficit and fight trade cheating. The use of tariffs has proven again to be a great tool to preserve critical manufacturing and good-paying jobs in the US.

We write, however, to express our concern about the recent postponement of some duties and calls for additional tariff reduction related to all COVID-19 supplies. Such a reduction or postponement would only harm our current and future preparedness as well as our economic recovery. These calls for less tariffs are short on merit and are nothing more than a veiled effort by the import lobby to obtain a policy change.

The International Trade Commission (ITC) produced a list of “known imported products related to the response to COVID-19” in response to a congressional inquiry.<sup>1</sup> The ITC did not determine whether the US manufactures these products, whether we can produce them soon, or whether there is a shortage of them. The ITC also did not consider whether tariffs were a barrier to acquiring these imported products. Requests for 90-day tariff suspension wrongly cover that entire list of imports without any further consideration.

For example, sterilization products are part of the ITC list. Many American companies have changed their operations to produce hand sanitizers. We are not aware of a shortage. Lifting tariffs would undercut US producers.

Face masks, swabs, and hospital gowns are COVID-related items. Textile maker Parkdale Mills responded aggressively to produce all of these items. Parkdale is an American manufacturing success story and the largest textile manufacturer in

<sup>1</sup> COVID-19 Related Goods: U.S. Imports and Tariffs, US International Trade Commission, Pub. No. 5047, April 2020.

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the western hemisphere. They employ more than 5,500 employees and have been assisting the White House coronavirus task force in supplying personal protective equipment (PPE) in the fight against this deadly virus. Further postponement of duties related to textiles, however, would be a massive blow to their hard work in supporting this nation's response efforts.

Face shields are another COVID item. Ankerpak, a small Georgia company, is helping to produce and ship tens of thousands of face shields per day. Many other companies are also producing face shields.

Xenex is a Texas company that is now increasing production of its LightStrike robot, which uses pulse xenon light to kill COVID in hospitals, clinics, and nursing homes. Their technology has reduced hospital-acquired infections by 50-85% in many hospitals, and is the standard of care at Mayo Clinic MD Anderson. Xenex should be supported by the US government, not undercut by tariff relief for imports.

Bright Path Labs is a US pharmaceutical company that is ready, willing, and able to produce COVID-19 medicine and other small molecule drugs and key pharmaceutical ingredients. Why should we continue to look to foreign lands for our vital medicines? Bright Path and others are ready and able to assist with COVID-19 response efforts, and now is the time to support these innovative US companies that provide lifesaving and essential therapies.

In addition, the only outside groups calling for these postponements are the same groups that sold out America's workers for cheap, low-cost foreign labor. And most of these calls come from groups who are heavily invested in the communist-controlled state of China—where formerly American companies made decisions based upon shareholder return over the concern and well-being of the American worker and community that it was abandoning.

No tariff relief should be considered when there are sufficient supplies to respond to needs, and where US companies can provide them. On April 9, 2020, CPA provided a list of hundreds of such domestic companies to President Trump. These companies, from all over the country, are currently producing COVID-19 related supplies or are ready, willing, and able to do so. The idea that we “do not make it here” is just false in most cases. America has the brightest and most advanced manufacturing capabilities.

The Office of the United States Trade Representative is a key decision-maker in ensuring our recovery from COVID-19 and that our rebuilding efforts are stronger than before. Stopping the flood of cheap imports will allow for our domestic manufacturing base to become stronger and it will assist in the reshoring effort that is being championed by President Trump.

In a time of historic national spending to stabilize and rebuild the economy, our next move should not be to allow our market to be flooded with cheap, unreliable, low-priced goods. That simply cancels out all of the spending and hard work done to revitalize the economy. Such a move provides zero incentive or assurance to American manufacturers and instead lines the

pockets of stateless companies and those adversaries who wish America harm. Why would we enrich those who facilitated and accelerated this pandemic?

The answer to our problems does not lie in a faraway land but rather is right in front of us. America's "can do" attitude has always propelled us through war, disaster, and downturn. It will be Americans that pull us through this pandemic. The federal government should use every tool in its arsenal to see that our economy grows and that we reshore these vital industries. A strong manufacturing base is crucial for our national security and we ask that the Office of the United States Trade Representative work hand in glove to see that such a pandemic affect never affects this great nation in the same way again.

For these reasons, CPA requests that you do not consider tariff postponement or suspension for COVID-19 related products except where US supplies are not immediately available for proven needs and where the reduction of tariffs is the only practical way to acquire them.

Thank you,



Daniel DiMicco, Chairman



Michael Stumo, CEO