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Congressman Philip M. Crane, Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means, Subcommittee on Trade
U.S. House of Representatives
1104 Longworth Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Re: Request for duty reduction on straw hats, H.R. 4583.

Dear Congressman Crane:

I would like to express my strong support for H. R. 4583, which would reduce the amount of duty payable on certain imported straw hats by amending Subheading 6504.00.60 of the Harmonized Tariff Schedule of the United States in the “General” duty column by striking “95.6 cents/doz.” and inserting “50 cents/doz.” The current duty rate for classified under this tariff item is 4.7% ad valorem + 95.6 cents per dozen. My reasons for supporting this legislation are as follows:

- The types of straw hats classified under HTS Subheading 6504.00.60 are being increasingly recognized by the public as an effective aid in preventing skin cancer, one of the fastest growing cancers in the United States. The American Association of Dermatology has recommended many of the straw hats imported under this tariff provision as useful in preventing skin cancer. Lowering the high specific rate on these types of hats would make them more affordable to those who need them, especially for those who work in outdoor trades like landscaping and farming.
- If this duty rate were lowered, the loss of revenue from lowering the specific rate to 50 cents/doz. would be approximately \$500,000 based upon 2001 trade statistics. The loss of revenue to the U.S. Government would be a small price to pay compared to the health benefits to the public in facilitating importation of these items.
- The types of hats that are imported under this tariff subheading are not restricted merchandise subject to any quotas, and are not competitive with any straw hats that are made in the United States. This bill would not be a controversial one.
- The provisions of this bill are easily incorporated into the Harmonized Tariff

Schedule of the United States, and would pose no difficulties to the Customs Service in their administration.

- The duty rates of the other hats and headgear provisions in the Harmonized Tariff Schedule are similar to the rate proposed in H.R. 4583. Lowering of the specific rate to 50 cents/dozen would make the overall duty rate of HTS 6504.00.60 more consistent with the duties on other headgear.
- Finally, I believe that H.R. 4583 should be made retroactive to entries made on or after January 1, 2002.

I respectfully urge you to consider the strong merits of public health, and consistency of trade policy that warrant passage of H.R. 4583. Thank you.

Yours Respectfully,

Eric C. Flom