



Alliance to End Slavery and
Trafficking
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Senator Orrin Hatch, Chairman
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
104 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Kevin Brady, Chairman
Committee on Ways and Means
301 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Senator Ron Wyden, Ranking Member
U.S. Senate Committee on Finance
221 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510

Representative Sandy Levin, Ranking
Member
Committee on Ways and Means
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Hatch and Chairman Brady and Senator Wyden and Representative Levin,

The Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST) supports sections 914(e) of the conference agreement on H.R. 644 (relating to countries on Tier 3 of the State Department's Trafficking in Persons Report), and section 910 of the agreement, (which relates to the consumptive demand exception in current law), the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015.

ATEST continues to support section 106(b)(6) of the Bipartisan Congressional Trade Priorities and Accountability Act of 2015, which would prohibit countries that are not making significant efforts to combat human trafficking from receiving expedited consideration of trade agreements with the United States.

ATEST believes that section 914(e) of the conference agreement on H.R. 644, also represents a positive step forward in the fight to combat human trafficking in the countries that are doing the least. Under the amendment, countries that are on Tier III in the State Department's annual Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report would not receive expedited consideration of trade agreements unless the country has taken concrete actions to implement the principal recommendations for that country that are contained in the latest TIP Report. This provision, originally conceived of in the Senate, reflects a balance between ensuring that countries that want expedited action on their trade agreements with the United States demonstrate real change, while at the same time maintaining the integrity of the State Department's TIP Report. We also support the modifications to this provision agreed in conference, which increase transparency on the evidence relied upon to make U.S. Government determinations regarding improvements in the anti-trafficking actions of foreign governments. We look forward to continuing to work with interested members to support the integrity of the TIP Report and related reports by other agencies in the future.

ATEST is also encouraged that the conference agreement includes section 910, a provision to eliminate a certain exception to the Trade Act of 1934. Existing law prohibits the importation of goods made with forced, prison, or other exploitative labor. By removing a pernicious exception to this existing authority that allows for the importation of such goods if there is a “consumptive demand” for them, the import restrictions will be strengthened and become a powerful lever to ensure that U.S. consumers do not buy products made, for example, by prisoners in China or the worst forms of child labor in Africa. Current law undermines the Department of Homeland Security investigations into these imports, and the U.S. Congress needs to make sure that the US government can do everything it can to stop the misuse of our open markets by those who exploit others and undercut American producers who play by the rules. Finally, this provision will strengthen implementation of the obligation contained in the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement to discourage the import of goods made by forced labor.

Taken together, these provisions provide new tools to promote real change and improve conditions for trafficked and exploited workers around the world. If you have any questions, please contact me at msperber@humanityunited.org or (631) 374-0749.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Melysa Sperber', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Melysa Sperber
Director, Alliance to End Slavery and Trafficking (ATEST)
Humanity United
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