

November 6, 2020

The Honorable Sherrod Brown
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
United States Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senators Brown and Wyden:

Thank you for your October 27, 2020, letter regarding the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region (XUAR).

The situation in XUAR is of enormous concern to the undersigned associations and our member companies. We have been working together and with other stakeholders to respond to this issue for some time. Forced labor in any form is horrific and intolerable, wherever it takes place. What is even more concerning is that forced labor – as horrific as it is – is only one component of a much larger campaign of oppression in this region.

Our members have long implemented rigorous due diligence activities to support and advance ethical manufacturing globally. These efforts have uncovered forced, bonded, and prison labor in facilities around the world. When they find such practices, our members act to root out and redress unacceptable and unethical practices.

Our members have been on the frontlines of deploying a range of best practices to prevent, identify, and mitigate instances of forced labor as well as joining forces in a collective effort to address the situation. Our members have been mapping out their supply chains and engaging with their supplier base and other partners to ensure there is no forced labor in their supply chains. We continue to explore alternative sourcing strategies and more effective due diligence mechanisms and technologies. That work has been and will continue in earnest. However, the situation in this region is of a scale, scope, and complexity – coupled with a lack of transparency – that is unprecedented in modern supply chains and goes beyond the capability of our members to fight this alone.

We strongly believe that the U.S. government must take a leadership role in a global approach that mobilizes the Administration and Congress, in conjunction with foreign governments, and engaging and partnering with industry, labor, and other important stakeholders. Marshalling the collective might of all stakeholders will be the most effective and only way of achieving our shared goal – ending forced labor practices and the larger campaign of oppression in the region.

The undersigned associations strongly condemn human rights abuses, including forced labor and the persecution and detention of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities in China. We stand ready to work with you and your staff, and with all stakeholders, to find meaningful measures that would effectively safeguard human rights. We would appreciate the opportunity to meet with you to discuss what our organizations and our members are doing and determine possible paths forward.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

American Apparel & Footwear Association
Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America
National Retail Federation
Retail Industry Leaders Association

U.S. Chamber of Commerce
U.S.-China Business Council
U.S. Council for International Business
U.S. Fashion Industry Association