



National Retail Federation



RETAIL INDUSTRY LEADERS ASSOCIATION



UNITED STATES FASHION INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

July 10, 2023

Chairman Jason Smith
House Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
1011 Longworth
Washington, DC 20515

Chairman Ron Wyden
Senate Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
221 Dirksen
Washington, DC 20510

Ranking Member Richard Neal
House Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives
372 Cannon
Washington, DC 20515

Ranking Member Mike Crapo
Senate Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate
239 Dirksen
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairmen Smith and Wyden, Ranking Members Neal and Crapo:

We write to request your support for the immediate and long-term reauthorization of the Haitian Hemispheric Opportunity through Partnership Encouragement (HOPE) and the Haiti Economic Lift Program (HELP) Acts, commonly known as HOPE/HELP. We know you are closely looking at renewal of other preference programs, including the Generalized System of Preferences (GSP) and the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), both initiatives that we strongly support. We urge action as soon as possible to renew these trade programs as well as HOPE/HELP.

The HOPE/HELP trade preference program allows duty free access for certain apparel products from Haiti. Despite the many challenges Haiti faces, HOPE/HELP has allowed Haiti to build a thriving garment sector. Unfortunately, the program is set to expire in 2025. Our Associations represent U.S. businesses that invest in this sector, and our industry relies on predictability. We strongly urge Congress to renew this essential legislation for at least a further ten years.

The recent uptick in gang violence and deteriorating security situation has made Haiti an increasingly difficult place to do business. Nevertheless, several factories and buyers have

worked through these challenges and remained in Haiti. As HOPE/HELP is set to expire in 2025, these factories and buyers are making decisions now about whether to continue doing business in Haiti. HOPE/HELP has been foundational in facilitating investment in Haiti's garment sector and the security of this program's long-term renewal is critical for continued operations in the region. With the program expiring in two short years, every month that goes by without a reauthorization increases the risk of factories and buyers leaving Haiti. Some already have.

While Haiti has faced both economic and humanitarian challenges, the most important thing Congress can do to encourage continued operations is to pass an immediate reauthorization of the HOPE/HELP program for at least another ten years. This will create certainty for businesses operating in Haiti and stability for Haitians employed in the garment sector.

Congress agrees that nearshoring manufacturing, including apparel production, is a top priority. Haiti's apparel sector has the potential to play a transformative role in this effort; thus, it is essential that the HOPE/HELP programs be renewed seamlessly. Without timely HOPE/HELP reauthorization, Haiti will not be seen as a viable nearshoring option for businesses.

Finally, we note that the Administration strongly supports renewal of this program and recently called upon Congress to take action, noting, "At this critical time, it is important that producers and investors in Haiti, those they do business with, and the workers upon whom they rely have certainty about the uninterrupted continuation of the HOPE/HELP program."

For these reasons, we urge your support for the immediate and long-term reauthorization of the HOPE/HELP legislation – as well as measures that renew the GSP and AGOA programs - as soon as possible.

We thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)
National Retail Federation (NRF)
Outdoor Industry Association (OIA)
Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA)
U.S. Fashion Industry Association (USFIA)