July 17, 2019

The Honorable Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
United States Department of Agriculture  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Secretary Perdue,

We are writing to you regarding our nation’s hardwood lumber producers and the Administration’s trade mitigation assistance package announced on May 23, 2019. We ask that hardwood producers be included in any future assistance packages the Administration may undertake. China is by far the largest importer of American hardwood, and our trade dispute with the Chinese is ravaging this industry that supports jobs and communities across our country.

The impact of Chinese counter tariffs on hardwood, part of the escalating trade tensions between our nations, will be detrimental if a solution is not found. Prior to the levying of this tariff in September 2018, China purchased 50% of U.S. hardwood grade lumber exports – approximately $2 billion worth of product. Once the tariffs were in place, demand slowed, and the value of hardwood exports fell by $154 million per quarter as exports to China declined by 42 percent. These losses are certain to worsen exponentially as the tariffs increase.

This dramatic shift in economic conditions holds severe ramifications for the 685,000 jobs that are supported by the hardwood industry. This includes hardwooding Americans from mill yard workers to transporters, craftsmen, loggers, and foresters. With an excessive supply of hardwood now clogging the global marketplace, the ability of hardwood mills to continue their operations is jeopardized. Their closure would inhibit domestic consumers accessing finished products, while potentially allowing China and other international interests to simply buy raw hardwood at lower prices. In addition to weakening the hardwood industry, this aspect of the trade dispute endangers family tree farm operations that harvest timber responsibly to ensure healthy trees, land, and soil.

We are pleased that $100 million was made available in the recent mitigation assistance package for the international promotion of American goods. However, we feel strongly that the hardwood industry requires financial support akin to what other commodities impacted by current trade and tariff disputes are receiving. Its survival is critical to the health of our economy more broadly.

As we continue to encourage the Administration to seek a quick resolution to current tensions with China, we believe mitigation assistance is critical in the intermediary. We appreciate your attention to our request and look forward to your prompt consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,
Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Chris Pappas
Member of Congress

Glenn Thompson
Member of Congress

Bruce Westerman
Member of Congress

Anthony Brindisi
Member of Congress

Michael Guest
Member of Congress

Jack Bergman
Member of Congress

James R. Baird
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress

David Kustoff
Member of Congress

Antonio Delgado
Member of Congress

Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress
Mike Kelly
Member of Congress

John Joyce
Member of Congress

John B. Larson
Member of Congress

Al Lawson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Andy Barr
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

David B. McKinley, P.E
Member of Congress

Ben Cline
Member of Congress

Brett Guthrie
Member of Congress

Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress

Scott DesJarlais
Member of Congress

Bennie G. Thompson
Member of Congress
Joe Courtney  
Member of Congress

Richard Hudson  
Member of Congress

Trent Kelly  
Member of Congress

Brian Higgins  
Member of Congress

Bob Gibbs  
Member of Congress

Robert J. Wittman  
Member of Congress

Fred Keller  
Member of Congress

Denver Riggleman  
Member of Congress

Steven M. Palazzo  
Member of Congress

Peter Welch  
Member of Congress

Tom Reed  
Member of Congress

Rosa L. DeLauro  
Member of Congress
James Comer
Member of Congress

Bradley Byrne
Member of Congress