

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

October 23, 2014

Ms. Ronnie Goldberg
Senior Counsel
United States Council for International Business
1212 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10036

Dear Ms. Goldberg:

Earlier this year, members of Congress asked the Obama Administration to support the International Labour Organization's (ILO) efforts to combat gender-based violence in the workplace around the world and across industries.¹ To our knowledge, the United States, along with several other countries and many leading international labor and women's groups, support the ILO's efforts. However, your opposition to such proposals during the March meeting hindered their advancement. We write to better understand the nature of your opposition and to urge that the United States Council for International Business reconsider its position. We encourage you instead to support the proposal for a standard-setting item on "violence against women and men in the world of work" at the November 2014 Governing Body Session of the ILO.

Gender-based violence is among the most rampant human rights violations in the world—and it most acutely affects women. Women are the driving force of many global industries, comprising, for example, the majority of the workforce in the worldwide textile industry. Tragically, however, their contribution comes at the cost of severe physical and economic violence exacted upon them. Worldwide, 35 percent of women experience direct violence, and between 40 and 50 percent of women experience unwanted sexual advances, physical contact or other forms of sexual harassment at work.

Gender-based violence can be severely damaging to victims' health and well-being, and is costly to employers and society alike. It can take many forms, such as harassment, stalking behavior, threats, and verbal and physical abuse. Those behaviors can hamper job performance, lower productivity, and decrease workforce participation. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, gender-based violence costs the U.S. economy an estimated \$5.8 billion a year in direct medical and mental health expenditures and lost productivity. The number is much higher in countries with workplace protections weaker than those in the United States.

The proposed convention is particularly important to women working in specific industries, such

¹ <http://democrats.edworkforce.house.gov/press-release/house-dems-seek-international-labor-accord-gender-based-violence-work>.

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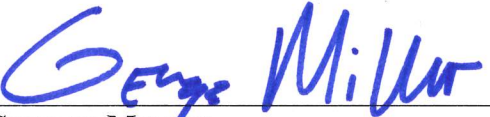
as the ready-made garment industry. In the textile trade, women make up the vast majority of workers. They toil in sweatshop conditions, are routinely denied appropriate compensation and workplace protections — including health and safety protections — and are subjected to a culture of verbal and physical abuse and exploitation by owners, managers and supervisors. Global supply chains are built on this production model, and it is imperative that new international norms be established to eliminate this degrading business model.

It is in the best interest of businesses worldwide to enact an international, tripartite standard to provide clear and comprehensive guidance on how to prevent the negative impacts of gender-based violence and to help create safe, productive working environments. Reliance on existing legal protections for assault and rape is insufficient to address the problem of gender-based workplace violence and ensure that all workers are protected from the full range of coercive and damaging behaviors. An international standard will not only protect victims but help employers. Absent strong laws and government mechanisms to address gender-based violence, employers may suffer from lost productivity or be compelled to individually bear the cost of ensuring the safety of their workers and reducing their risk of legal liability and negative publicity.

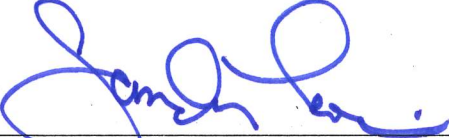
In conclusion, an international standard will promote worldwide cooperation and the creation of common definitions and frameworks to address this serious issue. We strongly urge the United States Council on International Business to join the United States in support of this measure.

We look forward to your response. Thank you for the consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



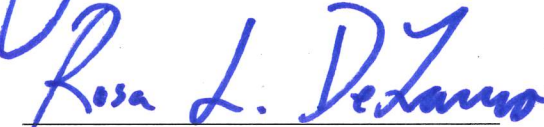
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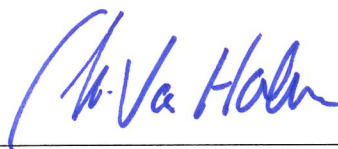


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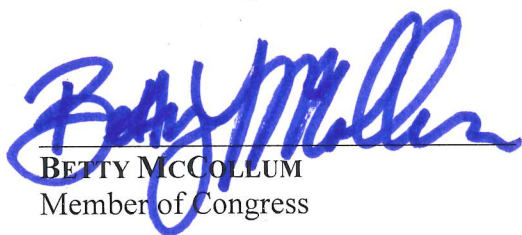
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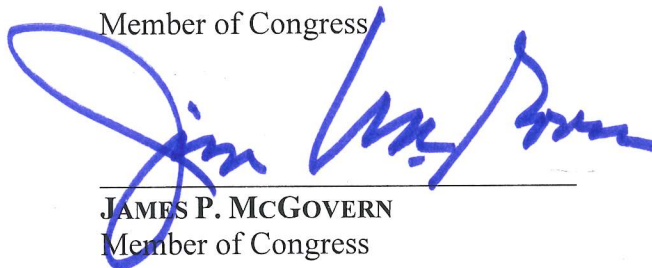
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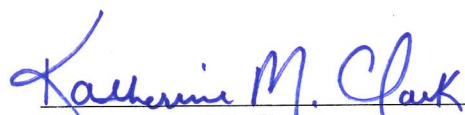
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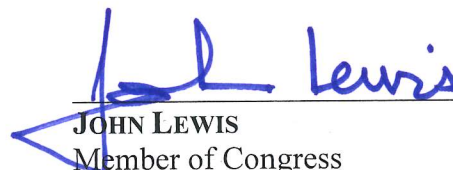
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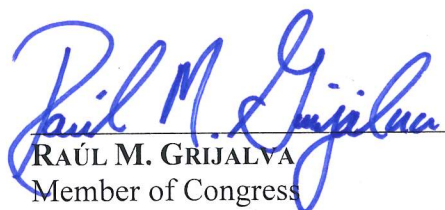
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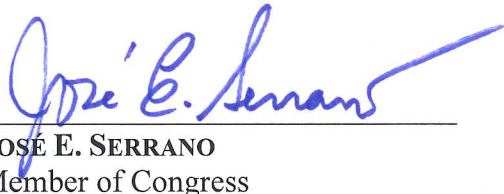
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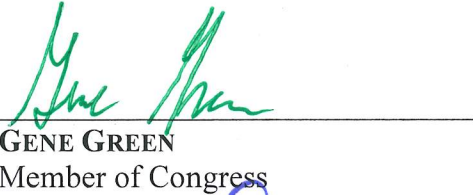
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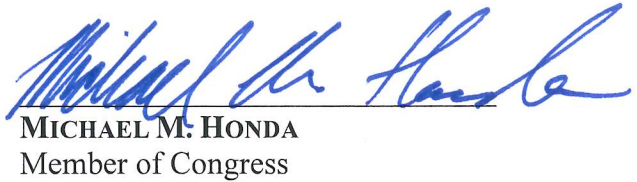
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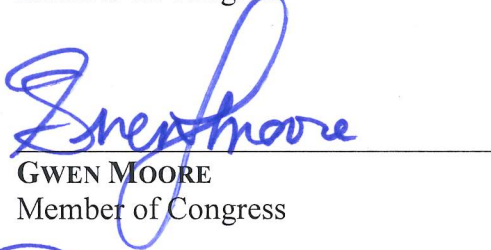
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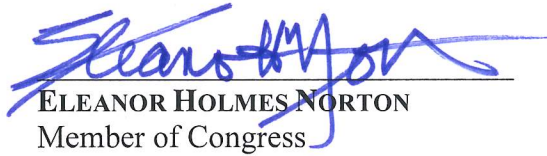
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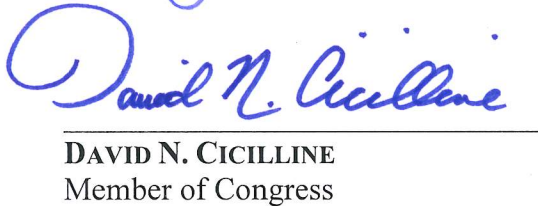
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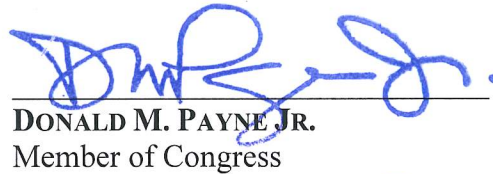
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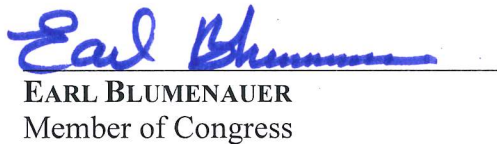
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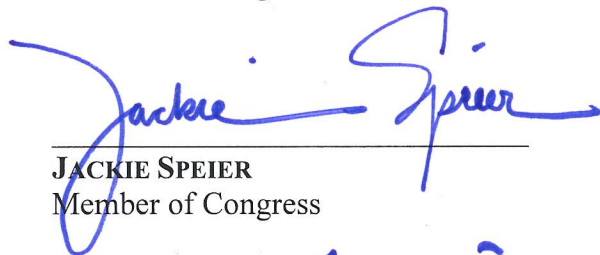
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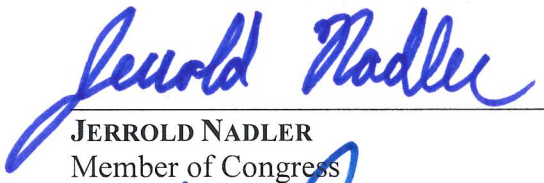
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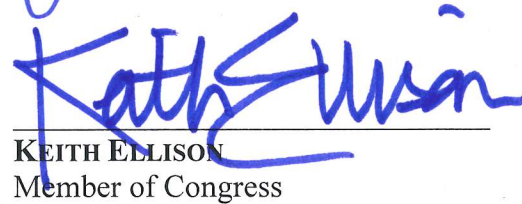
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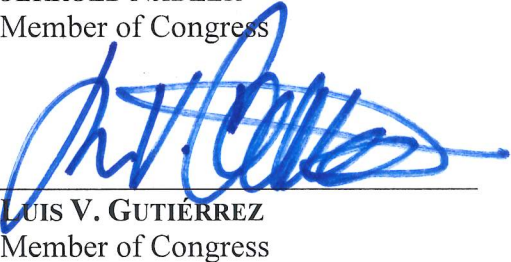
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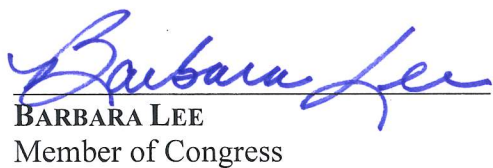
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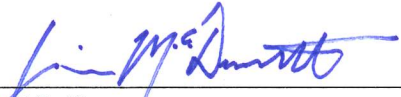


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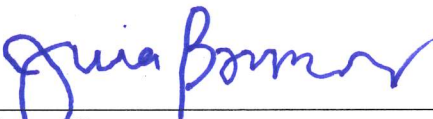
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STEVE COHEN
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JULIA BROWNLEY
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cc: Ariel Meyerstein, USCIB