

December 9, 2015

Dear Senator/Representative:

As faith-based organizations and religious bodies with a presence in the United States and in countries overseas, we write you today to express deep moral concerns related to H.R. 644, the “Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015” (also referred to as the Customs bill), particularly the version that passed in the House.

While we speak from unique traditions, we share common values that uphold the human dignity and worth of all people and lead us to serve vulnerable populations including victims of human trafficking. Based on these shared values, we urge you to reject any Customs Conference Report that aims to weaken the “No Fast Track for Human Traffickers” Menendez amendment to Trade Promotion Authority (TPA) that was included in the trade authority legislation that passed the House and Senate and was signed into law.

Our partners in the United States and around the world witness the human cost of modern day slavery, which traps an estimated 21 million individuals into forced labor and sex trafficking¹ and leads to immense physical and emotional suffering. We believe that upholding human rights and enforceable standards to eradicate human slavery should be at the center of any trade negotiation, in accordance with each of our religious and moral teachings.

With both the House and the Senate having acted to promote the eradication of the horrific practice of human trafficking around the world, we ask that you uphold this commitment and not allow any rollbacks via the Customs bill to the Menendez language now included in the enacted trade authority legislation. We should not give privileged access to the U.S. market to countries that condone human trafficking and the violation of human dignity. We ask you to reject any change or addition to the Menendez amendment in order to ensure that trade agreements do not foster, promote, or condone the scourge of modern day slavery.

We encourage you to consider how this change to the TPA law would affect the lives of some of the world’s most vulnerable communities as you consider how you will vote on the Customs bill Conference Report. If the final conferenced version of the Customs bill does not preserve without alteration the Menendez amendment on “No Fast Track for Human Traffickers”, then we urge all Members of Congress to oppose the legislation.

Sincerely,

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Leadership Conference of Women Religious
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Medical Mission Sisters, Alliance for Justice
NETWORK: A Catholic Social Justice Lobby
Presbyterian Church USA
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas – Institute Justice Team
Sisters of Notre Dame De Namur
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries

¹ [International Labor Organization](#), Forced Labor, Human Trafficking, and Slavery