

January 31, 2019

Dear Members of Congress,

As faith-based organizations and religious bodies with constituencies in the U.S. and around the world, we believe the **goal of U.S. trade policy should be to promote healthy communities, a flourishing environment, and an economy that benefits all.**

Based on our experience and witness globally, we have seen how current trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), have made it difficult for communities to access good jobs and essential services, such as clean water, adequate housing, nutritious food, and basic healthcare. Since the original NAFTA, we have witnessed how it contributed to significant job losses in key sectors for workers in the U.S., the displacement of Mexican farmers leading to forced migration, and poor working conditions for workers in industries that operate in Mexico.

We are encouraged by the changes to the agreement that seek to redress flaws in the original NAFTA and that are in line with our principles, but we believe more progress **must** be made in order for this agreement to truly reflect our vision for just and faithful trade policy. The revised NAFTA must:

Ensure access to affordable medicines.

Recognizing the inherent dignity of the human person, our faith traditions call us to care for the sick and respond to the needs of those living in poverty. Trade agreements have an enormous impact on the ability of the sick and poor to access the medicines they need.

The revised NAFTA dangerously expands intellectual property protections for pharmaceuticals, including extending market exclusivity for medicine, and adds language benefiting the pharmaceutical industry regarding price reimbursement decisions for Medicare and other government-run health programs. Not only will these provisions have devastating impacts on the health of patients in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, they would undermine Congress' ability to implement necessary reforms that would expand access to life-saving medicines.

We call on you to ensure that no terms of a renegotiated NAFTA go beyond the Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreement mandates. We ask that a renegotiated NAFTA reaffirm the TRIPS public health protections that enable the three countries to promote the human right to health.

Faithfully steward God's earth & uphold environmental protections.

We are united in our commitment to care for and be stewards of God's creation. We can no longer afford for U.S. trade policy to harm God's creation and the right to a healthy environment for future generations. Any trade agreement must incorporate such commitments as protecting the environment and curbing climate change.

The revised NAFTA falls short of these commitments. While the changes to the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS) provision are welcome, the three-year phase in period and the carve-in for oil and gas contracts with Mexico leave environmental protection measures open to challenge by corporations. The current text also includes only one out of seven multilateral environmental agreement (MEA) from recent U.S. trade agreements that are critical for environmental protection. The environmental and conservation provisions included are not required for adoption nor subject to enforcement.

The time is now to integrate our trade policy with the urgent need to protect our environment. As faith communities, we see the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change on the most vulnerable. The revised NAFTA must include the enforcement mechanisms necessary to ensure meaningful protections.

Ensure just labor practices.

Our faith traditions uphold the critical importance of the dignity of work. Trade rules should enhance workers' rights by supporting stable jobs with decent wages, protecting workers' freedom to organize, and promoting health & safety.

The revised NAFTA includes some positive labor provisions, including requirements for legislation strengthening protection for workers in Mexico, including measures that allow for more transparent unions and negotiation of contracts, and addressing the abuses perpetrated by 'protection contracts'. Other language on labor rights can and should be strengthened, however. The only way to ensure the adoption and ongoing maintenance of labor and wage protections is to include necessary monitoring and enforcement mechanisms.

To ensure the human rights and dignity of working people in all three countries, we call on you to strengthen the current text by including critical enforcement mechanisms that allow for swift and certain compliance with the agreement.

As faith communities, we believe all trade agreements must be evaluated by their impact on the common good and the most vulnerable. **We urge Congress to make the necessary changes to the revised NAFTA to ensure its impacts do not undermine those values.**

Sincerely,

American Muslim Health Professionals

Bayard Rustin Liberation Initiative

Benedictine Sisters

Church World Service

Columban Center for Advocacy and Outreach

Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd, US Provinces

Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Faith in Healthcare

Franciscan Action Network

Holy Cross International Justice Office

Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns

National Advocacy Center of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd

NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice

Pax Christi International

Pax Christi USA

Presbyterian Church (USA)

Presentation Sisters Social Justice Team

Sisters of Mercy of the Americas' Institute Justice Team

St. Thomas University Center for Ethics

The United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society

United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries