

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2018

The Honorable Robert Lighthizer
Ambassador
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20508

The Honorable Wilbur Ross
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20230

Ambassador Lighthizer and Secretary Ross:

We write to express our strong support for an exemption from the Section 232 tariffs for the Dominican Republic. Given the nation's commercial ties and geographic proximity to Puerto Rico, the continued application of the tariffs on steel and aluminum would have a significant impact on the territory's rebuilding process, affecting over three million United States citizens on the island. As we prepare for the looming hurricane season, now less than two months away, a gale of tariffs portend another crisis for the Caribbean region and the people of Puerto Rico.

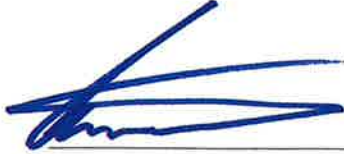
The Dominican Republic provides steel and aluminum products and concrete reinforcement bars—collectively known as rebar—to help rebuild Puerto Rico. As you are aware, Congress approved several billion dollars for the reconstruction of the island and this will create a high demand for construction materials in the short term. A tariff of this significance dangerously impacts the supply of these materials, further delaying our efforts to rebuild the island's infrastructure post Hurricane Maria and increasing costs for U.S. taxpayers and businesses alike. Steel shipped from the Dominican Republic to Puerto Rico accounts for less than 0.01% of total U.S. steel import, however its importance for Puerto Rico's recovery efforts cannot be emphasized enough.

Moreover, the Dominican Republic has taken action against unfairly traded steel and aluminum in its own market and has supported the United States in its efforts to address overcapacity at the World Trade Organization. The Dominican Republic has not engaged in the market-distorting practices that have led to the steel and aluminum overcapacity crises.

Considering the dangers posed by the 2018 hurricane season and the damage incurred by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico, we are hopeful that the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative, the Department of Commerce, and President Trump will promptly deduce that reaching an exemption agreement with the Dominican Republic from these tariffs will not only strengthen diplomatic and economic ties with our ally, but help the 3.4 million Americans of Puerto Rico rebuild the island's infrastructure.

We further request either a meeting or phone call to discuss this matter further. Should you have any additional questions, please do not hesitate to email Valeria.Carranza@mail.house.gov (Espaillat), Luis.Baco@mail.house.gov (González-Colón), Matthew.Gomez@mail.house.gov (Velazquez), Rafael.Hurtado@mail.house.gov (Gutiérrez), Angel.Nigaglioni@mail.house.gov (Serrano), or Martin.Rivera@mail.house.gov (Soto).

Thank you,



Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress



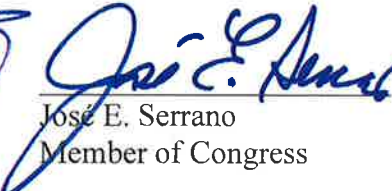
Jennifer González Colón
Member of Congress



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Darren Soto
Member of Congress



Bill Pascrell, Jr.
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Ron DeSantis
Member of Congress

cc: The White House