

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

May 8, 2020

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20508

Dear Mr. Ambassador:

We write to provide an update on the difficulties that Maine's specialty food and beverage industry continues to face as a result of Section 301 tariffs that were placed on specialty products from the European Union in October 2019. Restaurants, e-tailers, grocers, importers and distributors, many of which are small, locally-owned businesses, have experienced severe economic hardship due to the increased cost of goods. We appreciated the Administration's decision earlier this year to not increase the tariffs; however, the negative economic costs of the remaining 25 percent tariffs continue and the COVID-19 pandemic has only compounded the harm.

In April, we heard from a number of the small businesses in our state who shared stories about the harsh realities they are facing day to day. Demand for specialty goods has declined, leaving importers and distributors with months' worth of product, much of it perishable, in storage and in transit with no clear end date for the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumers are wary of increased prices during this uncertain time and the tariffs create an additional burden.

The removal of these tariffs should remain a top priority of ongoing trade negotiations with the European Union. Though we understand the intricacies of this process, the stress that has been placed on businesses in our state is significant. We encourage you to avoid subjecting Maine to ongoing economic harm.

Thank you for your continued attention to this urgent matter. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us or have your staff contact [REDACTED]

Sincerely,



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress