



July 31, 2015

Honorable Carolyn Maloney
Honorable Christopher Smith
United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives:

We write to commend your introduction of H.R. 3226, the Business Supply Chain Transparency on Trafficking and Slavery Act of 2015. We support passage of the legislation.

H.R. 3226 would require that companies make information about the supply chains of their products available to the public to help ensure that products are not the result of child and forced labor, slavery and human trafficking. The defense of human life and human dignity is a critical area of concern and engagement on the part of the Catholic Church and the bishops of the United States. We believe that your proposed legislation, if enacted, would play an important and critical role in enhancing respect for human dignity by combatting the conditions that permit the scourge of human trafficking to exist in the world today.

Due to growing awareness, education and outreach, human trafficking is no longer considered a hidden crime committed overseas, but understood as a real threat to individuals. Reflecting this growing knowledge, more companies are aware of the possible existence of modern day slavery in their global operations and supply chains. The principle that companies have a responsibility to respect human rights and address issues such as exploitative supply chains is rooted in moral law and has gained unprecedented acceptance over the past decade.

Pope Francis has eloquently described the concerns involved in this important area of the law. In his annual message for the celebration of the World Day of Peace, on January 1, 2015, the Holy Father observed:

“Businesses have a duty to ensure dignified working conditions and adequate salaries for their employees, but they must also be vigilant that forms of subjugation or human trafficking do not find their way into the distribution chain. Together with the social responsibility of businesses, there is also the social responsibility of consumers. Every person ought to have the awareness that purchasing is always a moral – and not simply an economic – act.”

In solidarity with the Holy See, USCCB and Catholic Relief Services (CRS) have historically combatted human trafficking both abroad and within the United States and continue with those efforts today. For over a decade, USCCB has been a national leader in advocacy and education efforts to eradicate sex and

labor trafficking. USCCB and its partners provided intensive case management services to victims of human trafficking, assisting more than 2,232 survivors of trafficking and over 500 of their family members.

In addition, CRS implemented more than 100 programs in more than 35 countries to reduce human trafficking and through public/private initiatives has recently engaged the corporate sector to help eradicate the worst forms of slave labor.

The Catholic Church views protection of the dignity of the human person as a cornerstone of the structure of human rights. Pope Francis, in one of his first homilies as pope, called on political, economic and social leaders to be “protectors,” showing “loving concern for each and every person.” In keeping with this longstanding teaching, we commend you on your sponsorship of H.R. 3226 and urge its prompt enactment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Eusebio Elizondo". The signature is written in a cursive style with a cross at the beginning.

Most Reverend Eusebio Elizondo
Auxiliary Bishop of Seattle, WA
Chairman, USCCB Committee on Migration

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carolyn Y. Woo". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Dr. Carolyn Y. Woo
President
Catholic Relief Services