March 16, 2021

The Honorable Charles E. Schumer
Majority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Minority Leader
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Ron Wyden
Chairman, Senate Committee on
Finance
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Crapo
Ranking Member, Senate Committee
on Finance
U.S. Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Majority Leader Schumer, Minority Leader McConnell, Chairman Wyden, and Ranking Member Crapo:

As a coalition of the nation's largest labor unions and environmental groups, collectively representing millions of members and supporters, the BlueGreen Alliance writes in support of the nomination of the Honorable Katherine Tai as the next U.S. Trade Representative.

A founding principle of the BlueGreen Alliance is support for a just trade policy that promotes growth and prosperity across all sectors of the global society—not just for multinational corporations and few elites—and embeds enforceable labor, environmental, and human rights standards in our trade agreements. But all too often, trade agreements have undermined American manufacturing and shipped good-paying jobs overseas; dumped pollution in border communities; contained huge corporate giveaways, and undermined labor, human rights and environmental standards.

This nomination comes at a critical time for our country's trade policy. In addition to the COVID-19 pandemic, we are facing record economic and racial inequality, as well as the impacts of climate change. Our nation's trade agenda fundamentally impacts our climate goals, laying out the guidelines and guardrails for all future agreements. It can mean job and carbon leakage, or it can affirm President' Biden's bold principals to lead the rest of the world in acting on climate change in a manner that lifts up working people.

Through an open, public process, the U.S. can partner with other nations in mutually beneficial trade and climate agreements that are fair, protect workers' rights and jobs, safeguard the environment; ensure the democratic processes of sovereign nations are not undermined by unelected bodies; and raise the bar for consumer and public protections in all nations that are signatories.

2701 University Ave. SE, Suite 209
Minneapolis, MN 55414

1020 19th Street NW, Suite 600
Washington, D.C. 20036

369 Pine Street, Suite 700
San Francisco, CA 94104

To meet this vital mission, we will need leadership from the U.S. Trade Representative to center working people and the environment as we negotiate and renegotiate trade agreements. We must ensure that all U.S. trade agreements incorporate the following elements:

- *An open and transparent process.* This means inviting and incorporating public input on U.S. proposals for agreements, and making negotiating texts available for public comment after each negotiating round. Workers, environmentalists, and other key stakeholders should be part of the process to make sure negotiators understand the impact of the deal on jobs and the environment.
- *Strong and binding labor and environmental protections—including wage and climate standards.* Any renegotiated agreements and all future agreements should require that signatory countries adopt living wages for workers and to implement policies to fulfill important international labor and environmental agreements, including the Paris Climate Agreement and the International Labour Organization's conventions. These commitments should be included in the core text of the agreement and trade sanctions should be used to penalize violations.
- *Strong, independent enforcement mechanisms.* Rules mean nothing if they aren't enforced. In the history of U.S. trade agreements, labor and environmental provisions have consistently been ignored. U.S. trade agreements need independent dispute settlement mechanisms for enforcing labor and environmental provisions rather than replicating the failed system of the past.
- *Protection and promotion of Buy American and green procurement policies such as Buy Clean.* Domestic efforts to use procurement policy to support and encourage American manufacturing and service sector employment, clean air and water, and a stable climate should not be limited or weakened by U.S. trade agreements.

In addition to establishing a new model for U.S. trade agreements, we need to use additional trade tools to help stem corporate outsourcing of jobs and pollution under the unfair trade deals of the past. For example, a new carbon dumping fee should be established at the border to penalize imports made with a high degree of climate pollution. This measure could bolster clean U.S. manufacturing and support job creation while closing the climate loophole in our trade policies and helping to encourage a global "race to the top" in climate action.

Our next U.S. Trade Representative should be someone who will understand the critical impact that trade has on working people and the environment–most notably climate change. Having served as Chief Trade Counsel for the House Ways and Means Committee, Katherine Tai has the experience to meet this challenge head on, ensuring that working people will be supported and addressing the climate crisis will be core to our trade agenda.

Throughout her career, Ms. Tai has worked for fairness and justice. While serving as General Counsel for the U.S. Trade Representative, she oversaw the most pressing issue for domestic manufacturing–China trade enforcement. She has consistently stood up for the interests of working people, including their need for clean air and water and a stable climate. We know she will continue to stand for fairness and justice as our next U.S. Trade Representative.

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As the new administration grapples with responding to the intersecting crises of climate change, economic and racial inequality, Katherine Tai's leadership as the U.S. Trade Representative will be essential to move our trade policy forward in a way that creates and sustains good jobs, lifts up communities and workers, and builds a more just, equitable, and cleaner economy.

We urge you to swiftly confirm this nominee.

Sincerely,

Jason Walsh
Executive Director
BlueGreen Alliance