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April 19, 2018

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

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

I am writing with regards to recent progress that has helped open China's borders to American agricultural products. As a Member of Congress from one of the largest agricultural-producing states, I have witnessed how low import tariffs encourage trade and promote job growth here at home. That is why I am concerned about China's announcements to increase tariffs on more than 200 U.S. products. I fear our farmers, low income families, and rural communities will bear the brunt of the consequences. While I remain optimistic about long-term success, I am worried these tariffs will reverse the progress we have made.

The success of pecans is an example of how advantageous trade policies can boost industries and spur investment. Just over three years ago, the import tariff on in-shell and shelled pecans was 24 percent. At the end of last year, it was just 7 percent. This dramatic decline was a win for the country, the state of Georgia, and the pecan industry. As a result, 2017 was a record year for pecans in terms of production and exports. Proudly, Georgia accounted for over 40 percent of the total U.S. pecan production. In total, the U.S. exported 30,551 metric tons valued at \$197,298,000. Clearly there is an expanding international market for pecans and the tariffs are an unnecessary setback.

The tariffs are also a setback for our local economies. America's middle class, especially in Georgia where one in seven people work in agriculture, will feel the ripple effect. In 2016, according to the United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service, the agriculture and food sectors were responsible for more than 21 million full and part time jobs. From reduced wages to agricultural job scarcity these tariffs threaten rural America which is still struggling to recover from the recession.

In America, farmers, ranches, and agricultural leaders have never been stronger or more productive. Now is not the time to constrain their success and growth. When we remove barriers and make it easier for our producers to compete globally, like in the case of pecans, everybody wins. Unfortunately, this is a time of uncertainty. I urge you to assess the wide-ranging impacts

these tariffs will have on America and work with the Administration and China to lower import tariffs to bring back stability to our producers and local economies.

With warmest personal regards, I remain yours.

Sincerely,

  
Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress