

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2020

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

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

We write in support of the request made by the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine (the Commission) to include both cultivated and wild frozen blueberry imports in your Section 201 safeguard investigation request to the United States International Trade Commission (ITC). Additionally, should you impose tariffs on blueberry imports based on the ITC's findings, we strongly encourage you to exclude tariffs on Canadian wild blueberry imports in their unprocessed, not-yet-ready for consumption form, which are delivered in bulk to Maine for further processing.

The wild blueberry industry has been an integral part of our state's economy and culture for centuries, and today it comprises nearly 500 growers and processors who harvest this iconic native crop across 44,000 acres in Maine. Our state is a top producer of wild blueberries globally, with a five-year average production of 83.6 million pounds. The harvesters, processors, and other businesses in the blueberry sector contribute an estimated \$250 million in direct and indirect economic activity to Maine each year.

Wild blueberries are far more perishable than those that are cultivated and although they can be consumed fresh, the Commission estimates that over 95 percent of the crop is sold in frozen form. Unfortunately, Maine's frozen wild blueberries are now competing with both frozen wild and frozen cultivated blueberries in the U.S. market as foreign producers, including China, have exponentially increased their blueberry production. In the top ten cultivated blueberry producing countries, processed production has increased 64.4 percent from 2014 to 2018. Consequently, Maine has lost an estimated 20 percent of its wild blueberry farms as prices continue their downward trajectory as they struggle to compete with imports of cheap frozen cultivated blueberries from overseas. Given the importance of the frozen market to Maine's blueberry producers, we believe that its inclusion in a Section 201 safeguard investigation will better inform your efforts to protect this iconic American industry.

Lastly, in both your request to the ITC and in any resulting tariffs, we urge you to consider the importance of Canadian wild blueberry imports to the viability of Maine's blueberry industry. As the Commission states in their letter, many of Maine's wild blueberry processing facilities use excess processing capacity by receiving bulk imports of wild blueberries from Canada. These blueberries arrive in a form not ready for consumption and are then processed into a frozen product ready for distribution and sale. These bulk imports do not harm Maine's domestic growers of wild blueberries, but rather these operations allow many of Maine's blueberry businesses to survive.

We appreciate your engagement on this important issue and hope you will take into consideration the requests made by the Wild Blueberry Commission of Maine to better inform your efforts to provide trade relief to this iconic and historic industry.

We stand ready to assist you in any way we can.

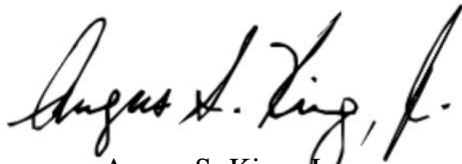
Sincerely,



Jared Golden
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Susan M. Collins
United States Senator