

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2015

The Honorable Thomas Perez
Secretary of Labor
200 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington DC 20210

Dear Secretary Perez,

We are writing in support of a recent submission under the North American Agreement on Labor Cooperation (NAALC) regarding Grupo Comercial Chedraui, Mexico's third largest retailer. We respectfully urge you to make every effort to expedite the review process in this case by the Bureau of International Labor Affairs' (ILAB) Office of Trade and Labor Affairs.

The labor rights violations described in this case are extremely concerning, underlining the need for abolition of so-called "protection contracts" in Mexico and enforcement of other basic norms and international labor standards.

Chedraui claims that throughout Mexico it has 233 collective bargaining agreements with 28 different unions. Despite this claim its employees do not know that a union is in place and have never seen or truly benefited from a union contract. As the submission details, Chedraui has a history of engaging in discriminatory conduct and violations of minimum employment standards. It is reported that the Company inquires about pregnancy status during job interviews, to enable it to screen out pregnant women. Equally egregious it has a wide-scale practice wherein "volunteer packers" are stationed at the checkout stands in all its grocery stores. These packers are "paid" only in tips and have no protections or safety net despite their regular labor and contributions to the Company's enterprise.

These practices are ongoing and workers have no ability under the current legal system to form independent unions and challenge unjust working conditions. The Mexican government has failed to meaningfully reform its labor laws and to effectively enforce its laws. Despite ongoing scrutiny from the International Labor Organization, these issues could be swept under the rug if ILAB does not take strong action in a case such as this one.

At this significant moment in trade negotiations, we believe it is imperative for the U.S. and Mexican governments to adhere to commitments outlined in existing trade agreements, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the NAALC. Swift action on this case would demonstrate the potential for making trade agreements vehicles for raising standards and the U.S. government's genuine investment in these mechanisms.

In sum, we urge you to take all steps necessary to expedite the review of this submission within a time frame faster than the 60 days normally contemplated in ILAB's procedures for NAALC submissions – if possible by the end of this month, so that ILAB can proceed to the review stage quickly in the new year. We hope that you will direct ILAB, as part of its review process, to

arrange for public hearings in a U.S. jurisdiction close to Mexico, such as Southern California, to facilitate testimony by Mexican witnesses. We believe giving voice to those impacted by Chedraui's conduct would help shed light of this serious situation, and hopefully open the door to appropriate remedies.

Thank you for your prompt attention.

Sincerely,



ALAN LOWENTHAL

Member of Congress



KAREN BASS

Member of Congress



JULIA BROWNLEY

Member of Congress



TONY CARDENAS

Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



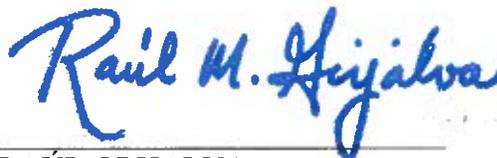
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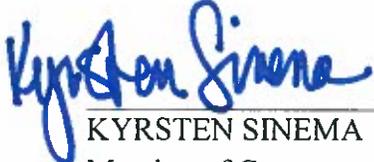


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