

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 19, 2019

Ambassador Robert E. Lighthizer
United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20506

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer

We write to you in support of a petition from the Association of Floral Importers of Florida ("AFIF") to the United States Trade Representative ("USTR") requesting that fresh cut roses be added to the list of products eligible for preferential treatment under the Generalized System of Preference ("GSP"). Given that the cut flowers industry is a critical component of Florida's economy, we hope that you will act favorably on this request.

U.S. floral imports, including imports of fresh cut roses, support more than 6,000 jobs in Florida, where more than 99% of fresh cut roses enter the United States. Imported flowers support more than 200,000 jobs throughout the United States. As of 2012, almost 20,000 businesses operate in the floral industry in the United States, including florists and wholesale merchants,¹ in addition to thousands of supermarket and mass market locations where flowers are sold. These businesses provide tens of thousands of year-round jobs in the United States. Each of these jobs and businesses stand to benefit from extending GSP eligibility to fresh cut roses.

It is important to note that adding fresh cut roses to the list of GSP-eligible products would not adversely affect domestic producers of fresh cut roses. Growing roses in the U.S. is costly due to a variety of factors, and domestic rose cultivation is insufficient to meet domestic year-round demand. Accordingly, excluding roses from the list of GSP-eligible products offers no benefit to a competing domestic industry, and actually imposes considerable costs on thousands of businesses and jobs that purchase other domestically grown flowers and that rely on imports of fresh cut roses – particularly in South Florida.

Adding fresh cut roses to the list of GSP-eligible products will also remove an unnecessary and job-stifling cost to U.S. floral importers, the floral wholesalers, supermarkets, mass markets and florists. At present, the enormous, year-round demand from U.S. consumers has continued in spite of this unnecessary cost. This ever-growing demand, which benefits the state of Florida overwhelmingly, stands to increase even more if fresh cut roses become eligible for GSP treatment, adding jobs and increasing prosperity in Florida, as well as throughout the domestic floral industry.

¹ 2012 Economic Census of the United States, North American Industry Classification System ("NAICS") Codes 424930 and 453110.

Adding fresh cut roses to the list of GSP-eligible products will benefit U.S. businesses and U.S. consumers in a sector of the economy that has the potential to continue to grow and create more jobs in the U.S., particularly in Florida. In the absence of viable domestic alternatives to imports of fresh cut roses, maintaining duties on imports of fresh cut roses from beneficiary developing countries simply imposes an unnecessary cost on U.S. consumers and businesses, limiting economic activity, without any commensurate benefit to U.S. industry.

With these considerations in mind and the clear benefit to the Florida floral industry and the domestic floral industry at large, we respectfully request your full and fair consideration adding fresh cut roses to the list of GSP-eligible products.

Sincerely,



Mario Diaz-Balart
Member of Congress



W. Gregory Steube
Member of Congress




Francis Rooney
Member of Congress



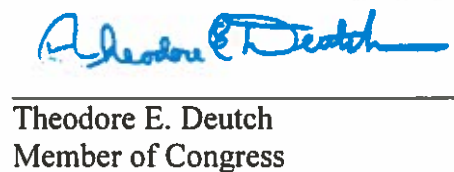
John Rutherford
Member of Congress



Gus Bilirakis
Member of Congress



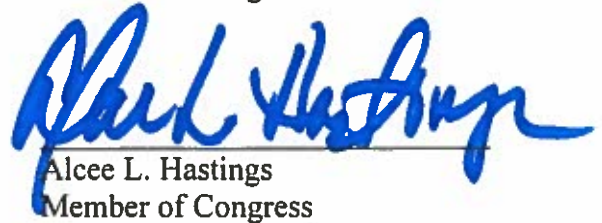
Al Lawson
Member of Congress



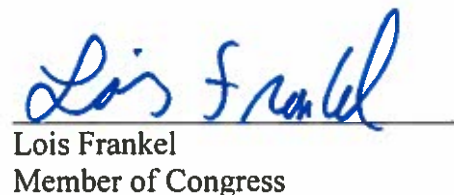
Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress



Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress



Darren Soto
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Brian Mast
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Donna Shalala
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Ross Spano
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Debbie Mucarsel-Powell
Member of Congress