

March 25, 2025

The Honorable Lori Chavez-DeRemer
Secretary
U.S. Department of Labor

Subject: Recission of Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) Uzbekistan Cotton Project

Dear Secretary Chavez-DeReemer,

The undersigned organizations have grave concerns with the recent decision to eliminate the Department's Bureau of International Labor Affairs (ILAB) project titled "[Enhancing Transparency and Accountability of Uzbekistan's Cotton Industry](#)".

We are members of the [Cotton Campaign](#), which is a unique coalition bringing business and labor together to end the use of forced labor and other labor abuses in the cotton sectors of Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan. This unprecedented coalition brings together the American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) and the U.S. Fashion Industry Association (USFIA), which represent thousands of American brands and retailers and millions of American workers, with organizations that promote worker rights, human rights and responsible supply chains.

The ILAB Uzbek cotton project complements the Cotton Campaign's work by building capacity and promoting compliance to ensure that farmers and workers in Uzbekistan's cotton industry have basic rights, crucial to fair and resilient supply chains. The ILAB Uzbek cotton project puts America first by protecting the interests of American workers and businesses. It ensures that American cotton and American businesses are competing on a level playing field, not competing against Uzbek cotton produced under unsafe and inhumane conditions or against unscrupulous textile and apparel companies that take advantage of that. The ILAB project also puts American workers first by making sure they are competing against workers who have similar rights and protections.

Eliminating this project, on the other hand, sets America back, enabling Uzbek cotton to undercut U.S. cotton and American farmers, forcing American workers to compete against forced labor and unsavory labor practices, and enabling dodgy textile and apparel companies to benefit from unfair trade practices, leading to a huge competitive advantage over U.S. businesses for one of the biggest materials used in clothes.

For these reasons, we urge you to immediately reinstate ILAB's Uzbek cotton project.

Thank you for your time and consideration in this important matter. Please contact American Apparel & Footwear Association's [Nate Herman](#) if you have any questions or there is any additional information we can provide to you.

Sincerely,

American Apparel & Footwear Association
U.S. Fashion Industry Association
Responsible Sourcing Network
Anti-Slavery International
Uzbek Forum for Human Rights

Child Labor Coalition
National Consumers League