

SweatFree New York

October 19, 2007

The Honorable Eliot Spitzer
State Capitol
Albany, NY 12224

Dear Governor Spitzer,

The individuals and organizations signed below want to thank you.

We are grateful that your Labor Commissioner, Patricia Smith, and members of her staff, especially Colleen Gardner (Executive Assistant for Labor Affairs), have been willing to meet with us and discuss ways to end state apparel procurement from sweatshops.

Sweatshop conditions in apparel and other industries in the United States and around the world are well documented. Most apparel workers - including children - work long hours under inhumane conditions for wages that are insufficient to pay for their families' basic needs. This is reason enough for changing the present deplorable situation.

But we also believe that sweatshop exploitation undermines global economic security and political stability, and undercuts efforts by ethical businesses in our state to compete in the global economy. As a significant consumer in the market place, New York State procurement can help level the playing field for ethical businesses and create significant demand for better working conditions in apparel and other global industries.

Each of us and our organizations strongly believe that New York, with its long and outstanding history of leadership against sweatshops, must be in the forefront of this growing national movement.

Toward this end, we hope that New York State will, under your leadership, take two important actions.

First, to formally join the new State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium, perhaps through an Executive Order. Acting on their own, states have limited resources to monitor factories, investigate sweatshop violations, and create positive incentive for better working conditions. Currently no state can tell for sure whether or not vendors are in fact selling them sweatfree goods. The solution is collaboration in sweatfree procurement among states and other public entities.

The State and Local Government Sweatfree Consortium is a new collaborative effort of U.S. states, local governments, school districts, and human rights advocates to ensure that we do not spend tax dollars on uniforms and other products made in sweatshops. The Consortium

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will pool resources for investigations and monitoring of supplier factories as well as coordinate the implementation and enforcement of sweatfree standards to ensure compliance with codes of conduct established by states and localities. The Consortium will begin working in the apparel sector, and consider expanding its scope to other industries where sweatshops are of concern. Likely members of the Consortium at this point include the states of Pennsylvania and Maine and the cities of San Francisco and Los Angeles.

Second, to improve upon New York's current anti-sweatshop procurement law and implement more stringent procurement policies that require state vendors and contractors to abide by fair labor standards in exchange for public contracts. In this way, we can be assured that our tax dollars do not subsidize sweatshops.

Colleen Gardner participated in this Consortium's initial convening last March in Harrisburg, PA, and now represents New York on its Interim Steering Committee. This Committee includes representatives of three states, two cities, one school district, as well as human rights advocates and labor rights experts associated with universities, non-governmental organizations and unions.

We look forward to continued collaboration with your Department of Labor, and we hope that you will lend your voice and executive commitment to these important and pioneering initiatives needed to end sweatshop labor.

Sincerely,

Bruce W. Both, President
United Food and Commercial Workers, Local 1500

Danny Donohue, President
CSEA Local 1000, AFSCME

Reverend David Dyson, Pastor
Lafayette Ave. Presbyterian Church, People of Faith Network

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AFSCME District Council 1707

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Anne Lally, Executive Director
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New York State United Teachers

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AFSCME, Council 82

Avram B. Lyon, Executive Director
Jewish Labor Committee

Tommy N. Mullins, International Vice President
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William Travis, President
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