



May 29, 2025

The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your recent comments indicating that your tariff policy is not focused on driving sneaker and T-shirt production to the U.S. You are absolutely right. We agree that tariff policy cannot scale up a domestic footwear and apparel industry.

We appreciate your acknowledgment of the real-world challenges our industries face. Footwear and apparel manufacturing are both labor- and capital-intensive. Shoemaking requires a large, skilled workforce dedicated to mastering intricate techniques—it still takes nearly 100 individual steps to produce a basic pair of leather dress shoes. Additionally, there are very few sourcing locations capable of meeting the scale and cost demands of U.S. consumers, and establishing footwear and apparel factories requires years of planning and investment.

For decades, the footwear and apparel industries have operated under a substantial tariff burden—the highest of any sector. While the average tariff rate on consumer goods is just over 2 percent, average apparel and footwear tariff rates exceed 14.5 and 12 percent, respectively, before any new tariffs are added. Children's shoes often reach rates of 20 percent, 48 percent, and higher, while many back-to-school clothing items carry a baseline 32 percent tariff. These costs ultimately fall on American families, limiting those families from participating in essential activities such as work, recreation, sports, and fitness, all activities that support mentally and physically healthier Americans and help boost the U.S. economy. Any new tariffs should recognize that our industries already exceed the baselines you have proposed and should not be stacked on top of these already elevated rates since that only conveys a cost burden to those U.S. consumers who can afford it least.

As much as our members would love to manufacture more footwear and apparel in the U.S., closer to our U.S. consumers, it is simply not feasible to do so at scale right now due to significant supply chain, labor, and cost constraints. Tariff policy cannot overcome these obstacles, especially when it is imposing new costs on existing manufacturers in our industry.

We appreciate your recognition of the need to deliver high-value, good paying jobs to American workers. As an industry that already directly supports more than 3.5 million high-value U.S. jobs as we design, craft, and deliver responsible, affordable, and authentic fashion to U.S. consumers, we stand ready to help.

This is a historic opportunity to advance our industries through smart, targeted trade policy. We urge you to adopt a pragmatic framework that reduces the tariff burden on footwear and apparel, increases high-value jobs for U.S. workers, and provides relief to hardworking American families.

Sincerely,

American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA)
Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA)
Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America (FDRA)
Sports & Fitness Industry Association (SFIA)
U.S. Fashion Industry Association (USFIA)