

MILWAUKEE COUNTY LABOR COUNCIL

American Federation of Labor-Congress of Industrial Organizations

March 21, 2007

Honorable Members of the
Common Council of Milwaukee

Dear Sirs:

The members, delegates and Executive Board of the Milwaukee County Labor Council, AFL-CIO, have reviewed and signed off on the ordinance relating to procurement of Fair Trade Certified products. As you may be aware, the Milwaukee County Labor Council has an affiliate body of 135 labor organizations and a membership of 47,000, most residing and working in the city of Milwaukee and Milwaukee County. Many of our members are not only personally supporting the efforts of this ordinance but have been affected by the poor public policies and trade agreements that exacerbate the conditions of other workers in the global community.

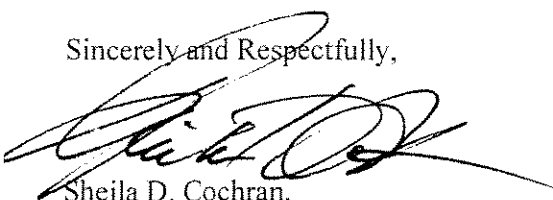
We are acutely aware of how public policy and free trade agreements at a national level have in fact affected the workforce of Milwaukee. We are aware that it has had a devastating affect on the loss of manufacturing in the city and the permanent loss of certain industries nation wide, clothing being at the top of the list. Globalization although touted by many as the base of competition for American workers, supposedly making us a better workforce has had many unfortunate and unintended consequences. Job loss in Milwaukee has caused increased unemployment, established a permanent under class and destabilized the workforce. We are all too familiar with the result.

There is another side of free trade policies that is even uglier than losing jobs. Child labor in countries that we purchase clothing and durable goods from; slavery and sweat shop conditions that exist in our country and all over the world; deplorable squalor that many of us would and often cannot imagine; poverty that drives the sale and trade of human beings as if they were cattle. Yet major industries and retailers thrive on the products produced by this type of labor to continue to feed the bottom line of many of our so called "industry leaders". Wal-Mart has used this very type of labor to continue to drive prices down to even cheaper pricing to attract and satisfy the voracious appetite of our ever growing consumer economy.

We as a municipality now have an opportunity and a responsibility to assure that we do not participate as a taxing authority and consumer to assist in these types of egregious practices. It always comes full circle, we lose jobs and tax base, budgets tighten, the burden shifts, we all pay the price.

You as a council have an opportunity to assist in stopping this cycle and we hope that you take this opportunity as the city of the first class to be first class in this policy. It might seem small in nature to some but it speaks volumes.

Sincerely and Respectfully,



Sheila D. Cochran,
Secretary Treasurer/COO

cc: MCLC Executive Board Members

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