Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 10, 2026

The Honorable Jamieson Greer
United States Trade Representative
Office of the United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

Re: Section 301 Investigations of Acts, Policies, and Practices of Certain Economies Relating to Structural Excess Capacity and Production in Manufacturing Sectors

Dear Ambassador Greer:

We write to urge the Office of the United States Trade Representative (USTR) to give close consideration, in its Section 301 investigations into structural excess capacity and production in manufacturing sectors, to the acute and worsening harm these practices are inflicting on the U.S. recycling industry, domestic manufacturing, and the American supply chains that depend on recycled feedstocks.

Most Americans reasonably assume that when they place a plastic bottle in the recycling bin, it is collected, processed, and turned into a new product. That system only works if there is a stable domestic market to sort, process, and sell that material to American manufacturers. Recycled polyethylene terephthalate (rPET), the material made from recycled plastic bottles, illustrates how quickly that system can break down.

Industry data indicate that more than one-quarter of U.S. PET recycling capacity has been lost in the past 12 months alone, with seven of approximately 30 domestic PET recycling facilities closing, largely due to suppressed prices caused by global over supply and rising imports of low-priced PET and rPET. Post-consumer PET bale values have fallen to single-digit cents per pound in many regions — levels market participants describe as the lowest in decades. As these end users turn to discounted imports, recyclers face declining revenue even where collection volumes remain strong. If the economics of the recycling sector do not stabilize, communities may be forced to scale back or suspend PET recycling programs altogether.

This is not simply a recycling issue, but also a manufacturing and economic competitiveness issue. Over the past five years, billions of dollars in private and municipal investment have been made in collection systems, sorting facilities, and processing plants that supply domestic PET manufacturers, supporting tens of thousands of local, non-exportable jobs across the country. When unfairly traded imports undermine domestic end markets, those investments, and the communities and manufacturers that depend on them, are placed at risk. Further downstream producers are forced to become import-dependent for critical supplies of PET and rPET. At the same time, 87 percent of Americans say recycling is important, and that support is bipartisan and widespread. When residents do the right thing by placing bottles in the recycling bin but see those materials diverted because there is no viable domestic market, public confidence in recycling, and in the policies that support it, is undermined.

We are concerned that government-supported overcapacity abroad — including subsidized production, preferential tax treatment, and export-oriented growth exceeding domestic demand — is a significant driver of this market collapse. We are also concerned by persistent questions about the traceability and verification of imported material represented as recycled content, which may not meet U.S. food-grade or end-use standards.

The United States is also uniquely vulnerable to these market distortions. Because the United States is not a Party to the Basel Convention, domestic recyclers have fewer export opportunities than many foreign competitors, making strong domestic end markets essential to the long-term viability of our recycling infrastructure.

The United States is not alone in identifying these risks. The European Union has imposed definitive anti-dumping duties on PET imports after finding injury to its domestic recycling and manufacturing base, and Canada has opened its own dumping and subsidy investigations into PET resin. We encourage USTR to act with similar urgency to ensure American manufacturers and recyclers compete on a level playing field.

We respectfully request that USTR:

1. Closely examine the acts, policies, and practices of Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, Thailand, and South Korea as they relate to structural excess capacity in PET and related plastics manufacturing;
2. Consider targeted, data-driven, and reviewable trade remedies on PET and PET-related imports—including products classified under Harmonized Tariff Schedule subheadings 3907.61, 3907.69, and 3907.99.50—to effectively address identified structural excess capacity and restore fair competition, and to counteract government policies and practices that unfairly advantage foreign PET producers, while avoiding unintended harm to legitimate recycling trade;
3. Support measures to improve traceability, verification, and transparency for recycled-content and country-of-origin claims that materially affect market access or pricing; and
4. Direct improved interagency coordination to strengthen enforcement against misclassification and increase visibility into PET/rPET trade flows, so that any remedies are properly targeted and grounded in accurate market data.

The challenges facing the domestic recycling industry are not the result of declining public participation or because these materials cannot be recycled. Rather, market-distorting foreign practices are weakening the domestic end markets necessary to sustain American recycling infrastructure, manufacturing, and future investment.

Sincerely,

Nicholas A. Langworthy
Member of Congress

Mike Ezell
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