



Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development
Committee on International Justice and Peace

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December 13, 2023

The Honorable Brian Schatz
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Mike Braun
374 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Brian Fitzpatrick
271 Cannon House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Earl Blumenauer
1111 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Schatz, Senator Braun, Representative Fitzpatrick, and Representative Blumenauer:

We write in support of the FOREST Act of 2023 (S. 3371, H.R. 6515). This bipartisan bill will regulate U.S. imports of goods typically connected to deforestation, such as soy, cocoa, and palm oil, enforcing greater transparency and accountability in global markets. The FOREST Act represents an opportunity for the United States to mitigate the harmful impact of forest loss worldwide and to encourage a more ethical and sustainable global commodity market.

Deforestation is a major contributor both to climate change and biodiversity loss. Commercial agricultural production of palm oil, soy, cattle, cocoa, and rubber, which are used in countless consumer products, is a major driver of deforestation worldwide. The FOREST Act will prevent the import of these commodities and their derivative products from accessing U.S. markets if they originate from illegally deforested lands, removing incentives for governments and companies to continue illegal deforestation. Additionally, the bill enables the United States to develop “action plans” with other nations to help them protect against illegal deforestation so that trade partnerships may continue.

As Pope Francis wrote in his encyclical on ecology *Laudato si'*, “caring for ecosystems demands far-sightedness ... the cost of the damage caused by [a] lack of concern is much greater than the economic benefits to be obtained” (no. 36). The FOREST Act is an example of legislation that takes a far-sighted and integral view of global commerce that includes the responsibility to care for forests and ecosystems around the world. Thank you for your continued work to care for the environment, our common home.

Sincerely,

Most Reverend Borys Gudziak
Archbishop of Ukrainian Catholic
Archeparchy of Philadelphia
Chairman, Committee on Domestic Justice
and Human Development

Most Reverend A. Elias Zaidan
Bishop of Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of
Lebanon
Chairman, Committee on International Justice
and Peace