

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 6, 2019

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer  
U.S. Trade Representative  
600 17th Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20508

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

We write to urge you to take action in response to the destruction of the Brazilian Amazon rainforest and the threat it poses to America and the rest of the world. Specifically, we urge you to postpone any negotiations regarding a trade agreement with Brazil until President Jair Bolsonaro takes decisive action to protect the Amazon rainforest, including active enforcement of Brazil's environmental laws to deter illegal deforestation, reinstatement of protections for indigenous communities, restoration of full funding and authorities to environmental regulators, and prosecution of violators who commit illegal deforestation. As Senators, we believe that any trade deal with Brazil must be made conditional upon clear commitments and demonstrable progress on protecting the Amazon.

We also encourage you to delay taking any steps to allow for the resumption of Brazil's beef exports to the United States. The reckless expansion of Brazil's beef industry has contributed to more deforestation than any other activity. According to Brazil's environmental regulator, Brazil's largest meatpacker, JBS, knowingly sourced beef from cattle raised on illegally deforested land. This is the same company that bribed Brazilian officials to evade food safety inspections, which led the United States to block imports of fresh beef from Brazil in 2017. Without stronger protections in place, allowing Brazil's beef back into U.S. markets will only accelerate the destruction of the Amazon.

Lastly, we urge you to act swiftly to resolve the U.S.-China trade war, which has disrupted global trade patterns and driven China to rely increasingly on Brazil for soybeans. As a result of the trade war, the volume of American soybean exports to China dropped 74% in 2018, and Brazil has rushed to fill in the gap. Brazil now supplies 75% of China's soybean imports, 23% more than before the trade war. In the absence of serious environmental protections, the increase in Brazil's soybean industry has led to an increase in clearing of the Amazon for more land.

The images of the rainforest ablaze are striking. Brazil's own National Institute for Space Research (INPE) reported that there have been 58,614 fires in the Brazilian Amazon so far this year, a 105 percent increase from 2018. There is clear evidence that cattle ranchers, farmers, and others involved in the for-profit development of the rainforest are largely responsible for this destruction.

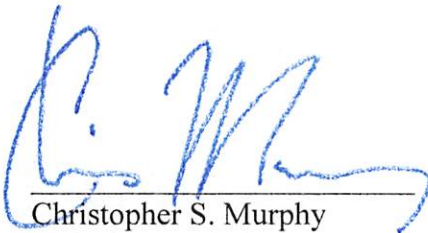
This is an international crisis with national security implications for the United States. The Amazon accounts for twenty-five percent of the carbon dioxide that global forests absorb each year, and its trees and plants impact global rainfall patterns, including those in the United States. The Amazon ecosystem is home to organisms critical to the health of the world's oceans and food chains. Scientists are unequivocal in their belief that the protection of this rainforest is critical to forestalling the most destructive severe weather and environmental change scenarios. Yet as these fires rage and deforestation continues unabated, the Amazon may reach a tipping

point of irreversible deforestation that will lock in the worst effects of the climate crisis that threatens all Americans and the rest of the world.

Rather than heeding these warnings, President Jair Bolsonaro has denied the evidence, fired the INPE director, and spread misinformation about the origins of the fires. He has rolled back protections for indigenous communities defending their territories from land grabbers, illegal loggers, and miners. And he has failed to properly enforce the country's environmental laws.

We are troubled that President Trump has announced an intention to negotiate a trade agreement with Brazil in the midst of this crisis and allow for the resumption of Brazil's beef exports, without any commitments from Brazil to protect the Amazon from illegal deforestation. Absent meaningful action by President Bolsonaro to protect the Amazon, the United States must make it clear that it will not negotiate with Brazil on trade. The United States cannot treat this as business as usual. The risks of continued inaction are simply too great.

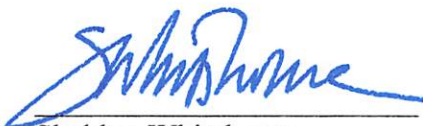
Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



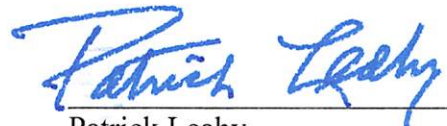
Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



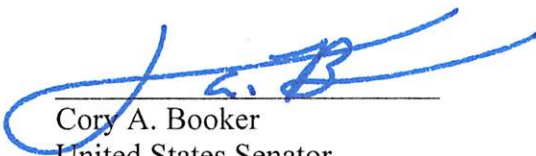
Tom Udall  
United States Senator



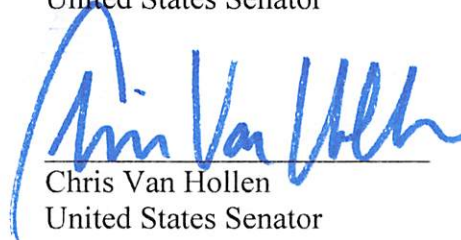
Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy  
United States Senator



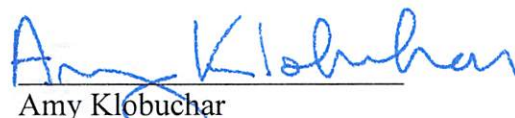
Cory A. Booker  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Kamala D. Harris  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator

*Richard Blumenthal* 11/11/11 11/11/11 11/11/11 11/11/11

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Richard Blumenthal  
United States Senator