December 7, 2020

Joseph Biden  
President-Elect

Kamala Harris  
Vice-President Elect

RE: Reject Fred Hochberg for U.S. Trade Representative and Other Key Administration Positions

Dear President-Elect Biden and Vice President-Elect Harris:

We congratulate you on your election as the 46th President of the United States. We commend your commitment to provide international leadership on climate issues including integrating climate change into our foreign policy agenda, adopting a climate-smart approach to trade, and pursuing an end to fossil fuel subsidies globally. Such leadership is a prerequisite to rebuilding an economy at home and abroad that supports sustainable communities, climate resilience, and a just and equitable future. For these reasons we oppose the appointment of former Export-Import Bank (EXIM) President and Chairman Fred Hochberg for U.S. Trade Representative and other key positions in your administration.

As President and Chairman of EXIM between 2009 and 2016, Fred Hochberg presided over the largest expansion of fossil fuel subsidies in the agency’s 86 year history, almost three times more support than EXIM provided during George W Bush’s two terms. During this time Hochberg approved almost $34 billion for over 70 fossil fuel projects abroad, which EXIM estimates will emit over 164 million metric tons of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere annually. This massive growth in fossil fuel financing occurred despite the fact that the international community was increasingly alarmed about catastrophic impacts of climate change and the counterproductive role of fossil fuel subsidies.

Fossil fuel projects that Hochberg shepherded to approval include:

- Liquid natural gas plants built inside the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area which pollute local fisheries and the Coral Sea marine ecosystem with dredging waste.
- The corruption-ridden Kusile coal plant in South Africa, the subject of a recent South African investigation involving contracts between the country’s energy utility, Eskom, and EXIM’s client, the U.S. firm Black & Veatch. EXIM financing for Kusile proceeded despite objections expressed to Hochberg by leading health experts at Physicians for Social Responsibility and Harvard Medical School due to anticipated coal plant pollution impacts on human health, including heart disease, cancer, stroke, and chronic lower respiratory diseases, and premature death.
- The Sasan coal plant and mine in India, whose lack of adequate safety measures resulted in a rate of fatalities so high that EXIM Bank’s Office of Inspector General was compelled to investigate and recommend remedial action, which in turn failed to prevent subsequent deadly accidents, including an ash pond dam that burst earlier this year, leading to a toxic flood killing six people, including two children.

Your Presidency must set a new course in foreign policy, including one that creates environmentally and economically sustainable jobs at home and abroad, and protects the climate, local environments and communities. Given his record of support for fossil fuel expansion world-wide and for deadly, polluting,
and corruption-inducing projects, we urge you to reject Fred Hochberg for U.S. Trade Representatives
and other key administration positions.

Sincerely,

350 Butte County
350 Humboldt
350 Silicon Valley
350 Hawaii
Amazon Watch
Athens County's Future Action Network
BioLogical Pest Management Inc.
Call to Action CO
Catholic Network US
Center for Biological Diversity
Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL)
Center for Sustainable Economy
Diálogo 2000-Jubileo Sur Argentina
Earth Action, Inc.
Earth Guardians
EcoEquity
Food & Water Watch
Friends of the Earth U.S.
Greenpeace
Hawaii Sustainable Lifestyle Network
Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy
Institute for Policy Studies Climate Policy Program
John Muir Project of Earth Island Institute
Livelihoods Knowledge Exchange Network
Long Beach Alliance for Clean Energy
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
MassSolar
Movement for Advancing Understanding on Sustainability And Mutuality (MAUSAM)
New York Communities for Change
No Kill Magazine
Nuclear Information and Resource Service (anti-nuclear)
Oil Change International
Organic Consumers Association
Our Revolution Hawaii
Pacific Environment
Peace Action
Peninsula Interfaith Climate Action
Rainforest Action Network
Rapid Shift Network
SoCal 350 Climate Action
Sunrise Project US
Texas Campaign for the Environment
The Revolving Door Project
Veterans For Peace: Climate Crisis Working Group