

“Thank you Chairman Johanson and Members of the Commission for convening this critical hearing.

“I am honored to stand with cherry growers from my home state of Michigan and I appreciate this opportunity to testify about an issue that is negatively impacting our state, the dumping of dried tart cherries from Turkey.

“Michigan produces more than 70 percent of the nation’s tart cherries. Unfortunately, Michigan cherry growers have been forced to compete with heavily government subsidized cherry products from Turkey. In Traverse City, host to the annual National Cherry Festival, many cherry growers have faced and are continuing to face financial ruin.

“Whether it was during my visit to Shoreline Fruit in Williamsburg or during a meeting last month in Traverse City, I have heard the same feedback repeatedly. Michigan producers have suffered from “dumping” of Turkish cherry products for years – resulting in a significant drop in the price of their products. For example, Turkey exported about 1.5 million pounds of dried tart cherries to the U.S. in 2018, more than three times as much as it did in 2016 and at rate of 500-600% of what the market would expect.

“That is why I applauded the ITC’s preliminary determination that confirms what we’ve long known, our Michigan cherry growers are being regularly undercut by unfair competition from Turkey.

“It is past time that the playing field is leveled and I’m glad that steps are now being taken to protect a key part of Michigan’s economy. However, Michigan cherry growers, who are already under tight budgets, should not have to pay millions of dollars just so they can compete in what should be a free marketplace.

“That is why I reintroduced my bipartisan legislation – the Self-Initiation Trade Enforcement Act. This legislation would give the Commerce Department greater ability to self-initiate action against trade abuses, like those we have seen from Turkey. Michigan’s farmers, manufacturers and small businesses should be able to focus on making the world’s best products instead of trying to navigate international trade bureaucracy. Moreover, bad actors should be held accountable.

“Turkish tart cherry exporters should finally face the stiffest of tariffs for their unfair trade practices that have undermined Michigan cherry growers. We must also prevent bad actors from exploiting trade loopholes. To the maximum extent of the law, tariffs should apply to Turkish cherries that have been further processed in a third country. We know that Turkish cherries have been sent to Brazil where they have undergone minor processing in order to avoid facing the consequences of our laws.

“Failing to address this loophole will only encourage what is tantamount to whack-a-mole. If the petitioners, who are already struggling as it is, are forced to bring a new case like this to address third country collaborators, then the bad actors will win.

“I know if trade rules are fair, our businesses and workers will always win. When you make your final determination, I implore you to issue them in line with your preliminary decision which would help level the playing field for cherry growers.

“Thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to your final determinations.”