Testimony

of

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Good morning, Steel Caucus Co-Chairs Crawford and Mrvan and members of the caucus, my name is Michael Millsap. I am a second-generation steelworker and my union career started at Republic Steel in 1973, advancing in the union to USW District 7 Director, which includes Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin.

In my current role, I chair several bargaining committees for the union, but important to this caucus is that I am the Steelworkers bargaining committee chair for U.S. Steel and the secretary of the union's bargaining committee for Cleveland Cliffs. These two companies will go into bargaining next year, kicking off a process that has occurred for 88 years now where we will negotiate agreements that will employ tens of thousands, and pump billions of dollars into local economies across the country.

As a leader in the steel industry, I can tell you that workers across the country are recognizing the benefits of joining USW. This last year we have seen over 1000 new steel industry workers join our union. The workers at the Independent Steelworkers Alliance at Liberty Steel voted to merge with USW just a few short months ago, and several hundred workers at JSW steel in Mingo Junction, Ohio also voted to join the USW.

These workers are Independents, Republicans, and Democrats and they are ready to work together to make their workplaces safer, to have a voice on the job, and to make the steel our country needs to drive the future. They know bargaining together with USW that they will do better than going alone, and that is my message to this committee today. All of us, despite our differences in approach must come together and strike a bargain that will ensure a strong domestic steel industry and reward American workers.

Other witnesses at this Caucus hearing can run through the challenges facing the domestic industry. The OECD highlights that excess capacity is projected to rise to 721 million metric tons by 2027. To give perspective, the U.S. produced around 83 million tons of steel last year.

Excess capacity pushes global prices down, and in turn makes it harder to invest and maintain U.S. production. The Section 232 tariffs on steel continue to be effective in pushing back the flood of excess capacity, but we need to push for longer term commitments from our trading partners to limit excess capacity. Congress has a role to play here by updating our trade laws and ignoring all the tariff rhetoric. We need to focus on policies that maintain an industry critical to our nation.

We also need to improve our trade agreements to have strong rule of origin policies in steel. As an example, the melt and pour standards in USMCA for automobiles was an important step, but we need to expand that melt and pour requirement to all steel heavy products traded in the USMCA.

Congress should push the administration to build a "Fortress America" related to steel products with USMCA. We cannot let our market be the dumping ground of other countries' steel in an effort to keep their unemployment rate low.

This requires strong domestic policies too; bills like the Ships for America Act, which would create a Maritime Security Trust Fund and a strategic plan to rebuild our domestic shipbuilding industry. This bill would end up creating new demand for American steel. We need to maintain and build on Buy America policies, and we need to grow into new markets and replace steel made in the People's Republic of China with USA-made steel.

We need to wisely spend American taxpayer dollars overseas too. The Steel Caucus should monitor our country's foreign financing systems, like the Export-Import Bank and the Development Finance Corporation, to ensure U.S. agencies are not unnecessarily buying foreign steel.

We want to work with this caucus on balancing the scales to make it easier for Steelworkers to fight for their jobs, invest in our communities, and create the next generation of high paying manufacturing jobs. This requires a mix of actions by Congress: investing in our plants, making it easier for workers to get a first contract when they join a union, and improving our trade laws to defend against unfair trade practices.

Our union is going to organize steelworkers across the country, fight for fair contracts for our members, and we will defend the American steel industry from anyone who seeks to close our plants and make our country less secure.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.