Child Labor Coalition

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[**www.stopchildlabor.org**](http://www.stopchildlabor.org)

April 27, 2015

Mr. Richard Burrows  
Chairman  
British American Tobacco PLC  
Globe House  
4 Temple Place  
London WC2R 2PG  
United Kingdom

Dear Mr. Burrows:

On June 24, 2014, a collection of organizations representing millions of Americans, including teachers, healthcare professionals, workers, farmworkers, and advocates concerned about children working in the tobacco fields wrote an open letter to the tobacco industry, outlining a number of steps that must be taken to eliminate child labor from tobacco supply chains.

We are heartened that your company has expressed interest in implementing stronger policies to end child labor in tobacco fields. However, as we noted in our letter, enacting higher standards is only a portion of the solution. To truly address the problem of child labor in tobacco, effective reporting mechanisms must be established in the fields, and adult workers must receive wages that allow them to support their families and send their children to school rather than work.

This is why we are writing you again, in support of efforts by the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC) to establish a system for tobacco farm workers in North Carolina to negotiate for better wages, improved working conditions, and establish a committee that can resolve issues for tobacco workers and growers when they arise. We ask that you sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with FLOC to negotiate recognition of the Dunlop Commission regarding tobacco growers and farmworkers in your supply chain. The Dunlop Commission has been successful in the past in establishing a private system of union recognition and dispute resolution between corporations, growers and workers. The Commission would set out rules and regulations, with participation of all sides, to mediate differences and address the long-term challenges workers and their families face in the tobacco industry. The expansion of the Dunlop Commission proposed by FLOC establishes field-based monitoring and resolution systems for labor rights abuses, including child labor, and makes provisions for remedies when appropriate. This would be an important counterpart to your increased commitments to end child labor.

Tobacco harvesting is hazardous work unsuitable for children, whose bodies and brains are still developing. Research has found that children working in tobacco are especially vulnerable to nicotine poisoning (green tobacco sickness), cancer, health problems from pesticide exposure, injuries from working with dangerous tools and climbing significant heights in curing barns, and respiratory problems from breathing tobacco dust. Most of the workers in the field do not expose their children to these hazards willingly, but out of necessity because of the low wages paid to tobacco harvesters. A 2010 study conducted by Oxfam America found that a quarter of workers surveyed in North Carolina—22 out of 86—were paid less than the federally mandated minimum wage of $7.25 per hour, and 57 workers said that their pay was not enough to meet their basic needs. Furthermore, it found that tobacco pricing mechanisms made it difficult for growers to provide adequately for field workers.

While training, education, regulations, and standards are all important pieces to solve problems in the tobacco supply chain, we believe that higher wages and improved working conditions obtained through a collective bargaining process are critical elements to a solution that leads to the elimination of child labor. Guaranteed the right to negotiate directly to improve conditions in the fields, farmworkers will be able to engage with the appropriate parties to be part of the solution to address labor issues. This approach will provide much more sustainable changes than any top-down approach and empower tobacco growing communities to address the root causes of child labor.

With this in mind, we urge you to boost your efforts to combat child labor by signing an agreement with FLOC to participate in the Dunlop Commission process. The Child Labor Coalition (CLC), its 35 members, and the additional 33vgroups that have signed on in support of this letter await a positive response and will continue to be in contact until this issue is resolved. You can reach Reid Maki, CLC coordinator, at 202-207-2820 if you would like to discuss this letter and our support for the farmworker efforts.

Sincerely,

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| 9to5 |
| American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL- CIO) |
| American Federation of Teachers |
| Association of Farmworker Opportunity Programs |
| Beyond Borders |
| California Institute for Rural Studies |
| Catholic Migrant Farmworker Network |
| Center for Latino Progress |
| Child Labor Coalition  Delaware Ecumenical Council on Children and Families |
| El Comite de Apoyo a Los Trabajadores Agricolas |
| Farmworker Association of Florida |
| Farmworker Justice |
| Food Chain Workers Alliance |
| Free The Slaves |
| International Brotherhood of the Teamsters |
| International Labor Rights Forum |
| Jobs with Justice |
| Latino Advocacy Coalition of Henderson County |
| League of United Latin American Citizens |
| Massachusetts Coalition for Occupational Safety & Health |
| Media Voices for Children |
| Migrant Clinicians Network |
| National Consumers League |
| National Education Association |
| National Farm Worker Ministry |
| Puente de la Costa Sur |
| Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Dubuque, Iowa |
| The Episcopal Church |
| The Ramsay Merriam Fund |
| The United Methodist Church – General Board of Church and Society |
| United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries |
| United Food & Commercial Workers International Union |
| United Mine Workers of America |
| Youth and Young Adult Network of the National Farm Worker Ministry |