

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 21, 2012

Mr. Rick Fedrizzi
President and CEO
U.S. Green Building Council
2101 L Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20037

Dear Mr. Fedrizzi:

As Members of Congress representing significant forest related interests, we write in regard to the proposed changes in the U.S. Green Building Council's (USGBC) Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) 2012 rating system. We were also signatories to a letter from 79 Members of Congress in July of 2010, urging changes to the U.S. Green Building Council's treatment of forest products. While we are encouraged by some positive steps taken to recognize wood products, we continue to be dismayed over your treatment of forest certification. Given that your organization is committed to a prosperous and sustainable future through green buildings, we respectfully request that you consider further changes to the LEED rating system that would reward responsible forest management here in the United States.

The most recent LEED 2012 draft includes language related to Life Cycle Assessment (LCA) and Environmental Product Declarations (EPDs). We encourage you to retain this language as it provides a pathway for wood's environmental benefits to be recognized. It has been demonstrated that wood products perform well compared to other materials in a properly defined LCA, representative of international standards. And furthermore, wood continues to store carbon absorbed during the tree's growing cycle.


Unfortunately, there is a continuation of artificial and subsequently irresponsible barriers to products derived from responsibly managed forest in the United States, which has the adverse effect of prohibiting these products from attaining "Responsible Extraction of Raw Materials" credits toward LEED certification. The only way for wood to earn this credit is to be "certified to the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) standard or an USGBC-approved equivalent." This is most unfortunate because 90% of FSC's land certifications are outside the United States, yet three quarters of the domestically certified forests are held to standards not recognized by LEED, including the Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI) and the American Tree Farm System (ATFS). It is that FSC certified products from Brazil, China or Russia can earn this credit, yet domestic products from forests certified to SFI and ATFS cannot earn these same credits. There are over 86 million acres certified to SFI and ATFS across the United States. These forests are responsibly managed, protect biodiversity and water quality; and generate products that would be excellent components of what is categorized as a green building.

We request that you consider and accept all credible forest management certification systems for qualification under the LEED rating system and to retain the LCA/EPD language for final LEED


2012 qualifications. Broadening the number of eligible certification programs and the recognition of wood will provide a great incentive for the utilization of domestically produced forest products.

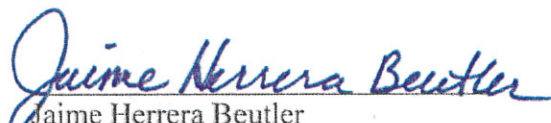
Sincerely,


Glenn 'GT' Thompson
Member of Congress

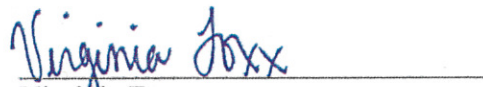

Kurt Schrader
Member of Congress


Walter Jones
Member of Congress


Terri Sewell
Member of Congress


Jaime Herrera Beutler
Member of Congress


Mike Ross
Member of Congress


Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress


Mike McIntyre
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Tom Vilsack, Secretary, U.S. Department of Agriculture