STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
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GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

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LT. GOVERNOR

November 10, 2026

The Honorable Scott Bessent
Secretary of the Treasury
U.S. Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Secretary Bessent,

To secure a thriving economy, we need a trade policy that works with our allied trading partners, brings supply chains home, and makes life affordable. However, the unpredictable federal tariff policy has left Michiganders with the highest tariff burden in the nation. These costs are clearly on display in the checkout line at the grocery store. There is an opportunity for this administration to act so that families across Michigan can better afford the basics. Today, I am writing to ask the federal government to end the new tariffs on food levied in 2025 and 2026,[1] and reimburse Michiganders for the costs they have incurred as a result of those tariffs.

Michigan households have borne a tariff burden of $6,485 per household since January 2025 according to the National Taxpayers Union Foundation – the highest in the nation.[2] That number is already up from over $5,600 just two months ago when I wrote about it in the *Wall Street Journal*.[3] Meanwhile, back in January, food prices were up 3.1% and grocery prices up 2.4% in 2025. Basic goods like ground beef were up 15% and coffee up 20%.[4] I worry how much worse these numbers will inevitably be when we look back at 2026.

In Michigan, where the food and agriculture industry is one of our largest sectors, we can see clearly how tariffs impact food. Earlier this year I directed state departments to report on the impact of tariffs on Michigan's economy.[5] The Michigan Department of Agriculture and Rural Development reports that tariffs contributed to a more than 3% increase in Michigan food prices in 2025. Michigan agricultural exports were down nearly 2% in 2025 compared to 2024. Specifically, exports to Canada fell 12.3% last year, signaling severe strain with our strongest trading partner—these tariffs and sudden policy reversals have weakened Michigan's competitiveness and disrupted long-standing trade relationships.[6]

In the face of these challenges, I have done what I can as governor to lower costs and put money in Michiganders' pockets. Our state has delivered free pre-K and school meals and more than $1 billion in tax cuts for seniors and working families. In my interactions with the federal government, including with President Trump, I have been fighting for a smarter, strategic trade policy, and I will keep at it. But without tangible relief from the federal government, Michigan families will continue to bear the costs.

Federal leaders can step up and make real change. I ask that you end the new food tariffs this administration has levied in 2025 and 2026, and reimburse Michiganders for the increased cost of food.

Sincerely,

Gretchen E. Whitmer
Governor of Michigan

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[1] Covering all tariffs impacting food prices, including tariffs on food, packaging, fertilizer, and agricultural machinery. TPC Tariff Tracker | Tax Policy Center

[2] Which States Pay the Most in Tariffs? All 50 States, DC & Puerto Rico, Ranked | State Tariffs Tracker

[3] ICYMI: Governor Whitmer Pens Wall Street Journal Op Ed Standing Up for Michigan Families and Businesses Against Expensive Tariffs

[4] Ask the expert: How tariffs are affecting food prices in Michigan | MSUToday | Michigan State University

[5] https://www.michigan.gov/whitmer/news/state-orders-and-directives/2026/04/02/executive-directive-2026-2-ongoing-impact-of-tariffs-on-michigans-economy

[6] ED 2026-2 MDARD Response.pdf