



**Statement of U.S. Senator Sherrod Brown,
Chairman of the Congressional-Executive
Commission on China (CECC)**

**CECC Hearing on “Working Conditions
and Factory Auditing in the Chinese
Toy Industry”**

Thursday, December 11, 2014

Today is the last hearing for this Congress. It has been an honor to chair this Commission with my counterpart Congressman Chris Smith, over these last three and a half years. I want to thank our other Commissioners for their participation and support. Finally, the great work of this Commission would not have been possible without our incredible staff.

It is fitting that we end this year on an issue that hits so close to home this holiday season.

As parents, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, we care deeply about the toys we buy our children. We care about their safety. And we should care about who makes these toys.

It used to be the case that toys were made in America, in proud towns across this country.

Towns like Bryan, Ohio, where for 40 years, workers at the Ohio Art Company made Etch A Sketch, a toy many of us played with as kids.

In Bryan, the company was a family. Etch A Sketch was the town mascot.

But then Walmart told the company that in order to keep its business they would need to sell the product for less than \$10. And so what did Ohio Art do? In 2001, they moved production of Etch A Sketch to Shenzhen, China. A hundred people lost their jobs. A community lost its pride.

Today, some 85 percent of our toys come from China.

They will be made by factory workers like the ones investigated in China Labor Watch’s most recent report.

Some of them are temp workers or students, making as little as \$1.23 an hour and working more than 100 hours of overtime a month, in blatant violation of China’s overtime laws.

They live in crowded dorms, as many as 18 people to a room. They stand for long hours at work. Emergency exit doors are locked.

At the base monthly wage they are making, it would take nearly two months for one of these workers to afford the Thomas the Train mountain set that sells for \$400 and is made in China.

We've seen this story repeated over and over again – American companies moving production to China to take advantage of cheap labor and poor labor enforcement and then resell these goods back to the United States. This business model is unprecedented in human history.

Eight years ago I introduced the Decent Working Conditions and Fair Competition Act to expand the Tariff Act of 1930 to prohibit the importation of goods made with sweatshop labor. But private industry said it didn't need a law, that members could deal with the problem on their own through codes of conduct, certifications, and audits. But eight years later, the problem hasn't gone away.

What I want to know today is, are corporate codes and self-policing sufficient, or do we need a new approach?

Does the toy industry in China need something like the legally-binding Bangladesh Accord, which I urged companies like Walmart and Target to join last year, or an anti-sweatshop law like the one I introduced eight years ago?

Something must be done. We need to be able to tell our children that the person who made their toys—perhaps the mother or father of another child—worked in a good place where she made a decent living.

We can't say that now.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses and turn it over to my co-chair Congressman Smith for his statement.