



June 4, 2025

The Honorable Howard Lutnick
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Subject: Comments Opposing Inclusion of Fitness Equipment Under Section 232 Tariffs; Docket ID: BIS-2025-0023

Dear Secretary Lutnick,

On behalf of the Health & Fitness Association (HFA), we respectfully submit these comments in response to submissions filed under Department of Commerce Docket BIS-2025-0023 that request the inclusion of certain fitness equipment—specifically dumbbells, kettlebells, and resistance machines—under Section 232 tariffs on derivative steel products. While we recognize the Department's responsibility to evaluate potential vulnerabilities in the steel supply chain, we urge you to consider the significant public health, economic, and small business consequences that such tariffs would impose on the fitness sector and the communities it serves.

The Health & Fitness Association is the leading trade association dedicated to enhancing mental and physical health in the United States by increasing access to physical activity. Our organization represents over 55,000 health and fitness businesses, which contribute more than \$22 billion to the economy each year and employ over 434,000 workers. Most importantly, our members help individuals live healthier lives—strengthening immune systems, improving mental health, increasing productivity, and reducing long-term healthcare costs.

The Critical Products and Technologies Initiative (CPTI) Submission Does Not Demonstrate That Inclusion Is Warranted

The Interim Final Rule¹ requires BIS to review inclusion requests to assess: (1) whether the described product at the eight- or ten-digit HTSUS classification is a derivative steel or aluminum article; and (2) whether such derivative article imports have increased in a manner that threatens to impair the national security or otherwise undermine the objectives set forth in the Section 232 investigation reports or related Inclusions Proclamations.

¹ *Adoption and Procedures of the Section 232 Steel and Aluminum Tariff Inclusions Process*, 90 Fed. Reg. 18,780 (Dep't Commerce May 2, 2025) ("*Interim Final Rule*").

1. CPTI Does Not Demonstrate that Exercise Equipment Is a Steel Derivative Article

CPTI narrowly defines “exercise equipment” as “weight machines and other exercise equipment made primarily from steel tubing.” But the Request asks BIS to impose tariffs on HTS classification 9506.91.00 — which covers **all** exercise equipment — regardless of whether the equipment is a weight machine or features steel tubing in any capacity. This classification includes cardio equipment, like bikes, rowers, treadmills and elliptical trainers; as well as yoga mats, blocks and bands. CPTI does not argue that these goods feature significant amounts of steel, let alone enough to warrant classification-wide treatment as steel derivative products.

Even within its narrow definition of “exercise equipment,” CPTI does not, as BIS has requested, offer any data showing the total value of the article’s steel content as a share of the equipment’s total value. Rather, CPTI simply says that exercise equipment is “made primarily from steel piping and tubing” and that steel represents a “substantial portion of their total material costs.” But CPTI makes no attempt to validate or quantify this blanket statement, or to apply the criteria that the administration previously has referenced in making this assessment. When adjusting imports on derivative aluminum and steel articles in Proclamation 9980, the President relied on the Department of Commerce’s determination that aluminum or steel articles must represent, “on average, two-thirds or more of the total cost of materials of the derivative article.” CPTI does not argue that this threshold is met for even a single item of exercise equipment, let alone across all equipment in the class.

2. Imports of Exercise Equipment Have Declined, Not Increased In Response to the Proclamations

CPTI also does not demonstrate that imports of exercise equipment in HTSUS classification 9506.91.00 have increased in response to the Section 232 tariffs imposed on upstream steel products in 2018. Exercise cycle imports (9506.91.00.10), for example, have averaged 3.2M units/year in 2022, 2023 and 2024 – a quantity 25% **lower** than the 4.2M units imported in 2019. For rowing machines (9506.91.00.20), imports in 2022, 2023 and 2024 were on average 11% above the 236 thousand units imported in 2019.² Overall, for these two key categories, there has been nothing even vaguely resembling a circumventing surge of imports.

The import data for these products sharply contradict that of other products the administration has designated as steel derivatives. The Administration’s 2020 expansion of steel derivative tariffs under Proclamation 9980 offers an instructive precedent.³ There, the President added specific derivative articles (including steel nails) only after import volumes showed sustained and significant increases. Indeed, the President required that the import increases must have “exceeded the 4 percent average increase in the total volume of goods imported into the United States during the same period.”⁴ From June 2018 to May 2019, imports of these articles rose by

² Source: Compiled using the U.S. International Trade Commission’s DataWeb. In both categories there were higher imports in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The CPTI letter’s reference to an increase since 2019 (1) is wrong and (2) does not even mention the pandemic which substantially increased sales (hence also imports) of exercise equipment.

³ See Proclamation 9980 of January 24, 2020, Adjusting Imports of Derivative Aluminum Articles and Derivative Steel Articles Into the United States, 85 Fed. Reg. 5281 (2020).

⁴ Id. at para. 6.

33% compared to the same period in 2017-2019, and by 29% compared to 2016-2017.⁵ The Commerce Secretary explicitly determined “that foreign producers of these derivative articles have increased shipments of such articles to the United States **to circumvent the duties** on ... steel articles imposed in Proclamation ... 9705.”⁶ This demonstrates that additions to the derivative list have been based on clear, data-supported increases in imports — criteria not established here.

No such surge has occurred for exercise equipment. Imports have not grown at all, let alone in a manner that would justify action under the precedent established by Proclamation 9980. The Request is not based on actual import data documenting any increase and should be rejected for that additional reason.

The Goldens’ Foundry Request Fails to Meet the Necessary Criteria for Inclusion.

The Interim Final Rule specifies that “[a]pplications for the inclusion of derivative articles must establish that imports of a derivative article have increased in a manner that threatens to impair the national security of the United States or otherwise undermine the objectives set forth in the 2018 Section 232 investigations or any Proclamations issued pursuant thereto.” The Request does not meet these criteria.⁷ It does not demonstrate that the products at issue are derivative articles, seeks inclusion of an HTSUS code that is far broader than the products it mentions, proposes a nonstandard tariff inconsistent with the Section 232 framework, and offers no importation data at all to support its request.

1. Dumbbells and Kettlebells Not Made from Covered Articles Cannot Be Steel Derivatives

Goldens’ Foundry admits that dumbbells and kettlebells are not exclusively made from steel, highlighting cast iron as another material they are made from.⁸ The importation of cast iron products has no impact on the domestic steel industry or the goals of Section 232 steel tariffs, and these articles should be excluded as steel derivatives.

What’s more, the Request fails to demonstrate that even steel-based dumbbells and kettlebells imports rely on covered steel articles within the scope of Section 232 tariffs. The President has explained that the Section 232 inclusion process is focused exclusively on goods that are produced “**by processing covered steel articles** into additional downstream steel derivative products” that are not subject to Section 232 tariffs.⁹ Goldens’ Foundry does not indicate that it produces dumbbells and kettlebells by processing any steel articles covered by the Section 232 action. Such products are frequently made from pig iron and perhaps steel scrap, but neither pig iron nor steel scrap is a covered steel article under the Section 232 action. Covered steel articles include bars, rods, flat-rolled sheets, wires, rails, plates, tubes, pipes, and ingots, which are classified at HTSUS headings 7206 and above. Pig iron is classified at HTSUS heading 7201, and

⁵ Id. at para. 7.

⁶ Id. (emphasis added).

⁷ Goldens’ Foundry & Machine Company, *Comment on Section 232 National Security Investigation of Imports of Certain Cast Iron Products*, Docket No. BIS-2025-0023-0041, U.S. Department of Commerce. Available at: <https://www.regulations.gov/document/BIS-2025-0023-0041>

⁸ Request at 2-3.

⁹ Presidential Proclamation 10896 at 11 (emphasis added).

steel scrap is classified at HTSUS heading 7204. Such products are conventionally used as inputs, not as finished outputs for domestic steel mills. The goal of the Section 232 action is to increase capacity utilization for the steel industry's outputs. If dumbbells and kettlebells are not made by processing covered steel articles produced by U.S. mills, then by definition they cannot qualify as downstream derivatives. Absent contrary information from Goldens' Foundry about its production operations for dumbbells and kettlebells, this simple fact provides a sufficient basis for Commerce to summarily reject the Section 232 inclusion request as improper.

2. The Request's Focus on Only Two Products within a Broader Classification is Improper

Goldens' Foundry seeks to impose Section 232 duties on just two products, dumbbells and kettlebells, both of which fall into an HTSUS classification, 9506.91.00.30, that covers a wide range of exercise equipment. By focusing solely on two products within that classification, the request is inconsistent with the Interim Final Rule and with past designations of derivative steel products, which are made at the level of either eight- or ten-digit HTSUS classifications. This is a second, independent basis for rejecting the Goldens' Foundry request: if granted, the inclusion of two products within a wider classification would not be administrable by U.S. Customs and Border and Protection.

In the alternative, it would not be appropriate for Commerce to read the Goldens' Foundry request as encompassing the full ten-digit classification. Even as it acknowledges that the applicable classification is a 'basket' code that includes other types of gym and exercise equipment beyond dumbbells and kettlebells," Goldens' Foundry provides no arguments, data, or factual support for inclusion of the entire ten-digit classification.¹⁰ If Goldens' Foundry had targeted the entire classification, the request would be disproportionately broad, sweeping in unrelated equipment such as resistance machines, treadmills, ellipticals, and other equipment. This would unfairly penalize American companies and consumers who rely on a global supply chain for a wide variety of fitness equipment.

3. A Specific Tariff Based on Weight Would Be Inconsistent with the Section 232 Action

Goldens' Foundry also departs from the Interim Final Rule and the administration's existing determinations in its request for specific tariff relief. Rather than requesting application of the current 25 percent ad valorem tariff that is provided by the Section 232 action, Goldens' Foundry proposes a punitive \$3 per kilogram specific tariff that is based on weight.¹¹ This highly unusual proposal for customized tariff relief provides yet another basis for Commerce to reject the Request.

4. Imports of Exercise Equipment Have Declined, Not Increased In Response to the Proclamations

Goldens' Foundry admits that it has no statistics or data showing that imports of dumbbells, kettlebells, or any other exercise equipment in HTSUS classification 9506.91.0030 have increased

¹⁰ Request at 3.

¹¹ Request at 5.

following the Section 232 tariffs imposed on upstream steel products in 2018.¹² In fact, import data shows the opposite trend. Imports classified as “Other” exercise equipment (9506.91.00.30) averaged \$2.2 billion per year in 2022, 2023, and 2024 — an annual value 30% lower than the average \$3.1 billion per year for 2019, 2020, and 2021.¹³ This decline undercuts any suggestion that there has been anything even vaguely resembling a circumventing surge of imports.

The import data for these products sharply contradict that of other products the administration has designated as steel derivatives. The Administration’s 2020 expansion of steel derivative tariffs under Proclamation 9980 offers an instructive precedent.¹⁴ There, the President added specific derivative articles (including steel nails) only after import volumes showed sustained and significant increases. Indeed, the President required that the import increases must have “exceeded the 4 percent average increase in the total volume of goods imported into the United States during the same period.”¹⁵ From June 2018 to May 2019, imports of these articles rose by 33% compared to the same period in 2017-2019, and by 29% compared to 2016-2017.¹⁶ The Commerce Secretary explicitly determined “that foreign producers of these derivative articles have increased shipments of such articles to the United States **to circumvent the duties** on ... steel articles imposed in Proclamation ... 9705.”¹⁷ This demonstrates that additions to the derivative list have been based on clear, data-supported increases in imports — criteria not established here.

No such surge has occurred for exercise equipment. Imports have not grown at all, let alone in a manner that would justify action under the precedent established by Proclamation 9980. The Request is not based on actual import data documenting any increase and should be rejected for that additional reason.

Tariffs Will Raise Costs, Reduce Access, and Undermine Small Business and Public Health

Including fitness equipment under Section 232 tariffs would substantially raise costs for the institutions, businesses, and individuals who depend on these tools to promote health and prevent disease. These consequences would ripple across public offerings, healthcare providers, fitness operators, and American households—ultimately reducing access to one of the nation’s most effective and affordable forms of preventive care.

Fitness facilities—including independent gyms and multi-location operators—must reinvest in commercial-grade strength and resistance equipment to ensure safety and meet consumer expectations. Many franchise systems, in particular, require their franchisees to upgrade equipment on fixed schedules to preserve brand quality and consistency. These reinvestments are typically non-negotiable and would become significantly more costly under the proposed tariffs—further tightening already narrow operating margins. Equipment costs also represent a

¹² Id. at 4.

¹³ Source: Compiled using the U.S. International Trade Commission’s DataWeb. There were higher imports in 2020 and 2021 as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

¹⁴ See Proclamation 9980 of January 24, 2020, Adjusting Imports of Derivative Aluminum Articles and Derivative Steel Articles Into the United States, 85 Fed. Reg. 5281 (2020).

¹⁵ Id. at para. 6.

¹⁶ Id. at para. 7.

¹⁷ Id. (emphasis added).

major portion of start-up expenses, and tariffs would raise the barrier to entry—delaying or deterring investment in communities that need access to these resources most.

The cost burden would also fall heavily on public institutions. Schools depend on resistance equipment to run physical education, sports strength and conditioning, and after-school health programs. Senior centers use strength training tools to improve mobility, prevent falls, and support longevity for older adults. The Department of Veterans Affairs relies on exercise equipment to rehabilitate service members managing injuries or chronic illness. These institutions typically operate within constrained budgets; cost increases from tariffs would result in reduced programming, outdated infrastructure, or fewer opportunities for those they serve.

Healthcare providers are also at risk. Supervised Exercise Therapy (SET)—a clinically validated and increasingly reimbursed treatment for cardiovascular disease, diabetes, and obesity—depends on the availability of dumbbells, free weights, and resistance machines. Tariffs would increase procurement costs for hospitals and outpatient clinics, limiting access to one of the few low-cost interventions proven to lower national healthcare expenditures.

American consumers, too, would be affected. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, home-based fitness has become a permanent fixture of the exercise landscape, especially for working parents, older adults, and rural residents. Affordable, one-time purchases such as dumbbells or kettlebells can deliver lifelong benefits—but only if consumers can access them. Tariffs would push these essential tools out of reach for many households, especially those with limited income or few nearby fitness options.

Most fitness facilities in the U.S. are small businesses already facing rising labor, insurance, and operating costs. New tariffs would increase financial pressure, forcing operators to delay upgrades, cut programming, reduce staff, or raise membership prices. The result would be decreased access to physical activity—particularly among lower-income Americans—and, in some cases, permanent facility closures and job losses.

The fitness industry is an essential part of both the U.S. small business landscape and the public health infrastructure. It contributes over \$22 billion to the national economy and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs. Imposing tariffs on the tools that sustain this contribution would undercut both economic competitiveness and public health goals. Public policy should prioritize removing—not adding—barriers to access.

Fitness Equipment Is Critical to Reversing the U.S. Chronic Disease Crisis

The Administration's *Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Report* highlights the urgent need to address the nation's chronic disease crisis: over 40% of children in the U.S. live with at least one chronic health condition, and more than 75% of youth are ineligible for military service due to physical or mental health issues.¹⁸ Physical activity is identified as one of the most effective

¹⁸ *Make America Healthy Again Report*, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and Executive Office of the President, 2025.

strategies to reverse these trends—and access to quality exercise equipment is central to that solution.

According to the 2025 HFA Consumer Report, 41.3% of Americans aged six and older visited a gym, studio, or club in 2024, generating over 5.7 billion visits annually.¹⁹ Participation spans all age groups and demographics, with especially strong engagement among Gen Z, Millennials, and older adults. Strength training remains a leading form of exercise, and dumbbells, kettlebells, and resistance machines are among the most commonly used tools across all facility types. Utilization is also growing among Hispanic and Latino populations and among women aged 25–44—highlighting the industry’s increasing relevance for underserved communities.

Critically, affordability is a key factor in driving participation. The 2024 HFA Price Elasticity Report shows that a 10% reduction in the cost of physical activity participation—through policy, incentives, or subsidy—would result in over 12 million new fitness participants and prevent more than 500,000 cases of chronic disease in the United States annually.²⁰ If reducing costs leads to these health gains, then raising them through tariffs would likely have the opposite effect—disincentivizing participation and undermining federal public health objectives.

Tariffs Directly Contradict the Goals of the MAHA Report

The *MAHA Report*, jointly issued by the Department of Health and Human Services and the Executive Office of the President, outlines a comprehensive framework for improving national health outcomes. Among its key recommendations, the report calls on federal policymakers to:

- Support increased access to affordable, safe, and culturally relevant spaces for physical activity;
- Increase public and private investments in movement-supportive infrastructure;
- Make physical activity a national public health priority by integrating it into chronic disease prevention and clinical care;
- Remove cost and access barriers to exercise and recreation; and
- Encourage innovations that promote strength, flexibility, and balance, particularly for youth, older adults, and underserved communities.

Tariffs on widely used exercise equipment are in direct conflict with these priorities. Instead of lowering barriers to physical activity, they raise them—especially for schools, senior centers, small businesses, and families operating under tight financial constraints. The report emphasizes the need to “make the healthy choice the easy choice,” but tariffs would do the opposite—making the healthy choice more expensive, less accessible, and less equitable.

¹⁹ 2025 HFA Consumer Report Headlines, Health & Fitness Association, 2025.

²⁰ 2024 HFA Price Elasticity Report: Physical Activity and Cost Sensitivity in the U.S., Health & Fitness Association and Portas Consulting, 2024.

If the Administration is committed to advancing a whole-of-government approach to preventing chronic disease and promoting public health, then trade policy must be aligned with those goals. Exempting fitness equipment from Section 232 tariffs is not only economically sound—it is necessary to preserve the integrity of the federal government’s own health agenda.

Conclusion

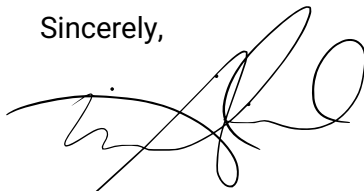
The proposed inclusion of fitness equipment under Section 232 tariffs lacks both a legal foundation and policy justification. Inclusion requests fail to meet the established criteria under the Interim Final Rule and Proclamation 9980. Petitioners do not demonstrate that fitness equipment qualifies as a derivative steel article, nor do they show any sustained increase in imports that would warrant action. Many of the products in question are not even manufactured using covered steel inputs, and relevant import volumes have declined in recent years.

Tariffs on fitness equipment would also directly conflict with the Administration’s public health priorities. The Make America Healthy Again (MAHA) Report emphasizes expanding access to physical activity as a national strategy to reduce chronic disease and improve health outcomes. Exercise tools like dumbbells, kettlebells, and resistance machines are essential to this effort—supporting programs in schools, senior centers, hospitals, and homes. New tariffs would raise costs, limit availability, and hinder the very progress federal health policy seeks to achieve.

Moreover, the economic impact on small businesses would be significant. Fitness facilities operate on tight margins and rely on affordable equipment to start up, reinvest, and grow. Increased costs would result in delayed upgrades, reduced programming, higher membership fees, and even closures—disproportionately affecting lower-income and underserved communities.

Fitness equipment is not a national security concern. It is a critical tool for preventive health, a key component of community wellness infrastructure, and a driver of economic activity in all 50 states. We respectfully urge the Department of Commerce to reject the inclusion of fitness equipment under Section 232 tariffs and to advance trade policies that support national health, economic opportunity, and evidence-based policymaking. The Health & Fitness Association welcomes continued engagement to support informed and balanced decisions that benefit American consumers and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Mike Goscinski', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Mike Goscinski
Vice President of Government Affairs
Health & Fitness Association