



President Joe Biden's [recent decision](#) to end the pandemic immigration ban, Title 42, has put Central American immigration back under the spotlight. As the administration prepares to respond to the expected border surge, more can be done to address the root causes of mass migration by incentivizing investments within key industries in Central America.

Carmen Aida Muñoz, executive director at the American Chamber of Commerce El Salvador, explains the situation well in [RealClearWorld](#):

***“Over the past few years, the United States has experienced the consequences of regional instability firsthand, as mass migration has threatened to overwhelm the country’s southern border. Economic instability is one of the most prominent factors driving this mass migration, and Salvadorans made up the second-largest group of unauthorized migrants entering the United States in 2019. Providing communities here in El Salvador with more economic opportunities would motivate many to stay home rather than make the long and dangerous journey north.”***

Two industries with the potential to provide economic opportunities in Central America are textiles and apparel. U.S. [apparel sourcing](#) has the capability to play a substantial role in creating economic stability in the region and mitigating a key driver of mass migration. With the current focus on supply chain resilience and diversification, now is an opportune time for this solution.

Unfortunately, current issues surrounding the Central American-Dominican Republic Free Trade Agreement hinder our ability to source Central American apparel to its highest potential. Steve Lamar, president and CEO of the American Apparel & Footwear Association, and Julie Hughes, president of the United States Fashion Industry Association, break down these challenges in a piece they co-authored for [Newsweek](#):

**“CAFTA-DR lacks the necessary incentives to draw the kind of apparel investment needed to seize the moment and move sourcing to Central America. As a result, while companies diversify out of China, the vast majority are finding it hard to move that production to the Western Hemisphere.”**

This lack of incentives caused the utilization rate of CAFTA-DR for apparel sourcing to hit a [record low](#) in 2021, validating the concerns of many in the industry. By creating policies that increase trade and encourage economic development, the U.S. could reverse this trend, create sustainable manufacturing jobs throughout the region, and mitigate the root causes of mass

migration. Steve Liston, senior director at the Council of Americas, outlines this solution in a piece he wrote for [The Hill](#):

**“By incentivizing trade and investment, President Biden, Vice President Kamala Harris, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai and members of Congress could help reduce the economic factors driving mass migration. This could benefit Americans and encourage manufacturers, investors and retailers to expand their engagement in CAFTA-DR partner countries, creating an engine for lasting prosperity in the region.”**

Learn more about the Coalition for Economic Partnerships in the Americas here:

<https://cepacoalition.com/>

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