

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0908

November 16, 2023

The Honorable Reta Jo Lewis
President and Chair of the Board of Directors
Export-Import Bank of the United States
811 Vermont Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20571

Dear Chair Lewis:

We write to request that the Export-Import Bank of the United States (EXIM) prioritize projects to secure critical mineral supply chains both domestically and in allied and partner nations, to reduce our dependence on the People's Republic of China (PRC). Due to the ubiquity of critical minerals in weapons systems, semiconductors, artificial intelligence, communications technology, energy infrastructure, and increasingly in transportation systems, prioritizing such projects is essential to U.S. national and economic security.

On October 18, 2023, a bipartisan group of Senators convened key domestic industry stakeholders, investors, and U.S. government officials to discuss how the U.S. can better support public and private investment in critical mineral projects and their operations at home and abroad. That discussion surfaced the urgent need for the U.S. government to deploy additional financial support to and provide increased project certainty for critical mineral industry stakeholders at each step in the production process – from mining, to refining and processing, to securing off take, and to manufacturing value-added products. Given the national security and economic implications of critical mineral supply chains, U.S. government agencies and institutions – including EXIM – must better align efforts to support the establishment of supply chains that serve our interests and are independent of the influence and control of the PRC.

The PRC uses its dominance over critical minerals and industrial metallurgical capacity as pinch points to control the supply and price stability of finished goods, giving them economic and political influence to dissuade investments and agreements in our interest and to advance other PRC strategic priorities. The only way to truly circumvent the PRC's control over the global market is to establish a U.S.-aligned industrial-scale critical mineral extraction and processing capacity within the U.S. and partner countries. While EXIM has dedicated more focus to national security-related investments, including via the Congressionally-mandated Program on China and Transformational Exports (CTEP) as an alternative to the PRC's Belt and Road Initiative, EXIM must do more to serve our national interest with respect to critical minerals – both by prioritizing such projects and by ensuring that the private sector is aware of EXIM's tools.

As such, we respectfully request the following:

First, that you seek formal approval from your board of directors to prioritize projects in the U.S. and with partners and allies that:

- develop critical mineral supply chains outside of the PRC for both the export and import of critical minerals in their unprocessed form and as finished goods, including in the form of permanent magnets and other products fit for use in defense systems; and
- separate, refine, and process critical minerals to secure reliable infrastructure to serve as an alternate option for mining entities to enter into off-take agreements with manufacturers, whom are not under the control or influence of the PRC.

Second, we recognize that to prioritize such projects, EXIM must receive worthy applications. We urge you to develop a strategy to coordinate and engage with the private sector, to ensure that industry is aware of the tools EXIM possesses and actively pursues EXIM's support.

Third, we request that you share any additional resources and statutory fixes that would better enable you to support critical mineral projects. For example, during the October 18 roundtable and in additional conversations with industry, we have repeatedly heard that it would be helpful to raise EXIM's default rate cap from the 2 percent ceiling to 4 percent, specifically for CTEP projects, to allow EXIM to support critical mineral projects in volatile markets. We request that you provide specific examples of how EXIM could better support such projects with a higher default rate cap.

The stakes of our economic struggle with the PRC demands that we reduce our dependence on them in critical technology sectors and for critical goods, especially those with defense and energy applications. We look forward to working together to prioritize securing a critical mineral supply chain that is immune from adversary influence and control.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator