

JAIME HERRERA BEUTLER  
3RD DISTRICT, SOUTHWEST WASHINGTON

COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LABOR, HEALTH AND  
HUMAN SERVICES, EDUCATION  
AND RELATED AGENCIES  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON LEGISLATIVE BRANCH

U.S. JOINT ECONOMIC COMMITTEE



Congress of the United States  
House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515-1602

□ 2352 RAYBURN HOB  
WASHINGTON D.C. 20515  
(202) 225-3536

□ GENERAL O.O. HOWARD HOUSE  
750 ANDERSON STREET, SUITE B  
VANCOUVER, WA 98661  
(360) 695-6292

WWW.JHB.HOUSE.GOV

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Vice President Michael R. Pence  
Office of the Vice President  
Room S-212, The Capitol  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Mr. Vice President,

First, I want to thank you for the work that you and the Administration have done so far to address the rapidly spreading, novel coronavirus – COVID-19. Serious concerns remain regarding the impact that this virus will have on the supply of personal protection equipment (PPE), medical devices, and prescription drugs – particularly generics. On February 27, the Food and Drug Administration reported that it had received its first notice from a drug manufacturer that the spread of COVID-19 has led to an inability to manufacture one of its products, marking the first known drug shortage caused by this virus. You are already aware of the shortages of PPE, such as N95 respirators, that have resulted from high demand and disruptions to the supply chain. Looking at drugs alone, approximately 40% of finished drugs are manufactured overseas and roughly 80% have ingredients that are produced overseas including many in China. Unfortunately, further strain on vital health equipment and medication are likely without urgent action.

I therefore urge you to work with Congress, drug makers and all other relevant stakeholders to ensure that there is as little impact as possible on the supply of PPE, medical devices, and prescription drugs in order to protect the safety and health of the American people.

To that end, I am requesting information so that Congress can support the Administration's efforts as efficiently as possible. I would appreciate answers to the following questions:

- What additional steps is the Administration taking to protect the supply chain of drugs, PPE, and medical devices? Furthermore, what is the Administration doing to encourage more companies to manufacture these products in the United States in order to protect our supply of life-saving medications? What actions are being taken to replenish our nation's stockpile?
- Additionally, it is crucial that a potential shortage of generic drugs does not force individuals without the means to pay for name-brand products to go without their prescriptions. What specific steps is the Administration taking to ensure patients can access their medications in the event that there is a shortage of generic options?

- Despite concerted efforts to control the spread of COVID-19, my home state of Washington has already seen six deaths from this virus and the number of Americans diagnosed is continuing to rise. With reports of failed tests, accidental releases of individuals that tested positive, and lack of access to tests outside of a hospital setting, what is the Administration doing to improve the accuracy of testing and provide better access to tests? Are partnerships with private manufacturers being explored?

Thank you in advance for your responses that will help me work in coordination with you and the Administration to confront this crisis head on and protect as many American citizens as possible.

Sincerely,



Jaime Herrera Beutler  
Member of Congress