

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 4, 2022

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
The President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

Thank you for your leadership in making COVID-19 vaccines, treatments, and diagnostics widely available to Americans in every community across the country. With more than 600 million shots in arms, 21,500 free testing sites, the ability to order at-home tests for free, and more treatments available now than at any point in the pandemic, the outlook in the United States is better than ever. Unfortunately, however, the prospect for many low-income countries is not so positive – putting the United States’ own success in jeopardy. In the aftermath of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Decision on the TRIPS Agreement for COVID-19 vaccines, we urge your administration to publicly support countries using the WTO flexibilities provided in the decision and support extending the Decision to COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics.

We have long held that a comprehensive TRIPS waiver covering vaccines, diagnostics, and therapeutics is vital to ensuring all global economies, including the United States’ economy, can recover from the pandemic and thrive. Simply put, we must make vaccines, testing, and treatments available everywhere if we are going to crush the virus anywhere. Unless countries cooperate and share medical technology, there simply will not be sufficient supply of vaccines, diagnostics, and treatments for many countries – particularly low-income countries – to effectively fight COVID-19. We are deeply concerned that despite the agreement at the 12th WTO Ministerial Conference, low-income countries will be hesitant to use WTO flexibilities. We urge you to announce that the United States supports countries using WTO flexibilities and that the United States will not use any diplomatic or trade-related pressure to stop countries from utilizing the flexibilities available to them.

As you know, paragraph 8 of the WTO Ministerial Decision on the TRIPS Agreement for COVID-19 vaccines states: “No later than six months from the date of the Decision, Members will decide on its extension to cover the production and supply of COVID-19 diagnostics and therapeutics.” It is critically important that the United States announce support for the extension and join with our allies South Africa and India to forcefully advocate to extend the Decision to diagnostics and therapeutics. Emerging COVID-19 variants are more contagious than ever and are mutating quickly. Extending the Decision to therapeutics and thus making them more available will reduce rates of serious illness, hospitalization, and death, which is especially

important in low-income countries where only a small percentage of the population has been vaccinated. Likewise, more widely available diagnostics will slow the spread of new variants by alerting individuals and public health officials of outbreaks so countermeasures can be employed, and treatments can be provided within the key window.

Your administration has worked to reestablish relationships with allies and restore the United States' position as a beacon for the rest of the world. Publicly supporting countries utilizing WTO vaccine flexibilities and extending the TRIPS Agreement to diagnostics and therapeutics will only further that legacy while defending the health and economic interests of all Americans. We urge you to announce U.S. support for these positions at the earliest possible opportunity.

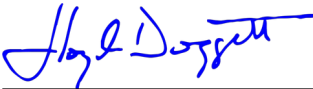
Sincerely,



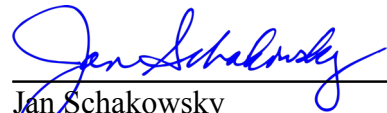
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Member of Congress
Chairman, Subcommittee on
Trade



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Member of Congress



Lloyd Doggett
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