

## United States Senate

June 25, 2021

The Honorable Patty Murray  
Chair  
Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Richard Burr  
Ranking Member  
Committee on Health, Education,  
Labor, and Pensions  
428 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr:

Thank you for your leadership in holding multiple hearings examining the federal response to COVID-19. These discussions have provided critical perspective and insight to address multiple aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic. We are at a moment now when expanding worldwide access to vaccines is central to controlling this virus and dangerous variants. The pandemic is not over anywhere, until it is over everywhere, and global herd immunity is achieved. This is a moral and humanitarian issue also central to U.S. economic and security issues. We urge you to convene a hearing to examine global vaccine production and distribution, continuing this series of productive and important discussions on COVID-19.

It is estimated that 11 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses are needed to vaccinate 70% of the global population and reach herd immunity.<sup>1</sup> So far, only 2.62 billion doses have been administered globally.<sup>2</sup> There is a need to ramp up COVID-19 vaccine manufacturing and distribution, but there is a lack of transparency about how best to expand the global supply of vaccines and address central issues, including global supply chains for vaccines and the materials needed to produce them. Furthermore, some countries simply lack the public health infrastructure to move vaccines into arms, much less manufacture them.

To expand global supply, experts are recommending that the United States and other wealthy nations donate many more COVID-19 vaccines and additional funding to COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX). President Biden recently announced that his Administration will donate 583 million COVID-19 vaccines via COVAX and bilateral agreements. At its June meeting, the G-7 pledged to donate 870 million doses to developing countries in order to end the pandemic by 2022.<sup>3,4</sup> These are significant and welcome developments.

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<sup>1</sup> Goodman, P.S., Mandavilli, A. Robbins, R., & Stevis-Gridneff, M. (2021, May 15). *What Would It Take to Vaccinate the World Against Covid?* The New York Times.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/05/15/world/americas/covid-vaccine-patent-biden.html>

<sup>2</sup> (2021, June 24). *WHO Coronavirus (COVID-19) Dashboard*. World Health Organization. <https://covid19.who.int/>

<sup>3</sup> Holland, S. (2021, June 10). *Biden says biggest vaccine donation 'supercharges' battle against coronavirus*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/business/healthcare-pharmaceuticals/biden-announce-donation-500-million-pfizer-doses-urge-others-join-2021-06-10/>

<sup>4</sup> Lee, J. & Morton, B. (2021, June 13). *G7: World leaders promise one billion Covid vaccine doses for poorer nations*. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-57461640>

However, the United States and its global partners should take additional steps to expand global vaccine supply and distribution, and experts are offering advice the HELP Committee should discuss. For example, to ramp up the manufacturing of COVID-19 vaccines, experts believe the United States should take a leadership role to expand access to raw materials necessary to produce COVID-19 vaccines, including by retrofitting, expanding, and constructing new manufacturing facilities. In addition, some recommend that the U.S. assist in transferring vaccine manufacturing technology so more countries can produce COVID-19 vaccines. Finally, policy experts recommend our nation should help develop or share the skilled workforce needed to manufacture these complex biological products.

Aside from assessing the steps we should take, the HELP Committee should consider how to improve visibility into the global COVID-19 vaccine supply chain. Currently, there is a lack of transparency into the global governing structure for how supplies are distributed and no clear view into how decisions are made to put aside production of one life-saving drug for another. Specifically, there is little visibility into the President's use of the Defense Production Act (DPA) to export raw materials to other countries and a lack of data on overall supply chain gaps. In addition, it is unclear whether federal agencies have sufficient funding and the authorizations they need to provide materials and technical assistance abroad, and whether they need additional direction from Congress to prioritize global COVID-19 vaccination efforts.

A public hearing in the HELP Committee with federal officials, supply chain experts, and vaccine manufacturers can help improve transparency of the global supply chain. This hearing can also help us determine what specific steps Congress and the Biden Administration need to take in the short-term and long-term to address any supply chain barriers to efficient global vaccine distribution. Finally, this hearing can help us ascertain the role and opportunity the United States has in building global capacity to manufacture and distribute COVID-19 vaccines.

We urge you to conduct a hearing on global COVID-19 vaccine distribution and stand ready to assist in any way possible to advance such a hearing. Thank you for your consideration of our request.

Sincerely,



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Tina Smith  
United States Senator



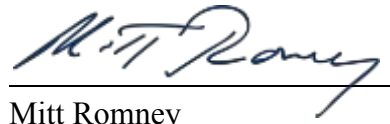
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Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator



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Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



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Mitt Romney  
United States Senator



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Lisa Murkowski  
United States Senator