

International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers

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Joseph Sellers, Jr.
General President

By Email

March 1, 2021

Maria L. Pagan
Acting United States Trade Representative
600 17th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20508

Dear Acting USTR Pagan:

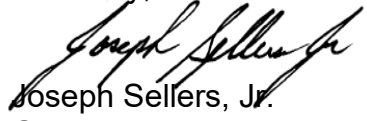
On behalf of the Pharmaceutical Industry Labor-Management Association (PILMA), which advances the dual goals of fostering innovation of life-saving cures and securing high-quality union construction jobs, I am writing to express concern about a proposal currently before the World Trade Organization (WTO). Last fall, South Africa and India proposed that the WTO waive global obligations to protect intellectual property related to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. PILMA views this proposal with great concern and believes that its sponsors are using the pandemic to erode longstanding intellectual property policies that would both undermine global health and harm jobs here in the United States.

South Africa, India, and several other longtime opponents of intellectual property rights claim, without evidence, that eliminating intellectual property will accelerate the discovery and manufacture of treatments and vaccines against COVID-19. Yet intellectual property rights have facilitated cooperation among companies to fight this disease, as demonstrated by the unprecedented collaborations established from the earliest days of the pandemic. Manufacturers established licensing arrangements to cooperate in the fastest-possible production of these vaccines, which will end the pandemic and jumpstart economic recovery. Delays in vaccine distribution are not the result of intellectual property rights but rather due to the extraordinary technical challenges of scaling-up manufacturing at a pace never before seen.

PILMA is concerned that countries like India, in pursuit of their narrow commercial interests, have long sought to undermine the global intellectual property protections that have driven job growth and discoveries in the United States. Thanks to strong intellectual property incentives, American companies have invested billions in research and development, including the construction of high-quality research and manufacturing facilities that can be built only by the most highly-skilled workers. When the pandemic hit our country, the United States drew upon this extraordinary research capacity to find solutions at an incredible speed. Our members are proud to have played our part in constructing the advanced facilities that will help end this health crisis.

PILMA therefore encourages you to continue to oppose this extreme and unnecessary proposal at the WTO, as well as proposals in any other multilateral organization that would undermine American innovation and, as a result, jeopardize American manufacturing jobs. We further encourage you to correct misinformation at the WTO and elsewhere so that the record is clear: intellectual property spurs investment in innovation and creates high-paying union jobs here in the United States. American policy should strengthen America's essential biomedical research and manufacturing sector and, in so doing, accelerate the discovery and development of new treatments and cures to benefit the world.

Sincerely,



Joseph Sellers, Jr.
General President

JS/tsl

cc: Hon. Ron Wyden, Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance
Hon. Mike Crapo, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance
Hon. Richard Neal, Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means
Hon. Kevin Brady, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means