



April 9, 2021

Dear Secretary Becerra,

Congratulations on your confirmation as Secretary of Health and Human Services. Our coalition of biopharmaceutical innovators and many building trades unions who build pharmaceutical facilities throughout the country look forward to working with you to protect and strengthen the health and well-being of the American people during this time of unprecedented challenge.

For over 15 years, many building trades unions and the biopharmaceutical industry have worked together within the Pharmaceutical Industry Labor-Management Association (PILMA), creating high-quality union jobs while fostering innovation to treat and cure disease. This partnership is essential to public health. Biopharmaceutical companies require exacting standards for research and manufacturing facilities. The building trades unions invest over \$1.6 billion annually to train their members and ensure the world's most highly trained and skilled workforce, often training specifically for biopharmaceutical manufacturing projects.

This alliance has been critically important throughout the COVID-19 crisis. America's biopharmaceutical companies moved with extraordinary speed to research, develop, and manufacture effective vaccines and treatments to help combat COVID-19. Making this possible were women and men of the building trades unions that worked tirelessly to ensure that infrastructure demand kept pace with scientific advancement. Without this strong partnership and our nation's innovative ecosystem, the world would not have seen vaccines and treatments so swiftly.

As the Biden Administration shapes and implements its health policy agenda, we ask that you support a policy direction that allows the United States to maintain and enhance our global leadership in biopharmaceutical development. This is as important for the revitalization of our economy as it is the protection of our societal health.

A robust biopharmaceutical sector means more construction and more well-paying jobs. From 2012 to 2017, there was \$22 billion spent on privately-funded pharmaceutical infrastructure projects in 11 states. In these states alone, union workers gained over 45 million work-hours, with additional money flowing into health and pension benefits.

Actions to impose price controls will thwart innovation, slow the movement of new therapies and cures to market, and cost thousands of jobs. For example, the Trump Administration's "Most Favored Nation" rule would allow the decision making of price-controlling foreign governments to establish pricing levels in the United States. If this rule is fully implemented, we would find ourselves aligning with countries in

which new medicines are not readily available to their citizens and in which there is significantly less investment in pharmaceutical research and development. Currently, nearly 75 percent of worldwide venture capital investment in biopharmaceutical research is directed toward American companies. Radical changes in our pricing structure could send that money – and those jobs – to countries like China that are actively competing with us.

Similarly, proposals in Congress that were also advocated by the previous Administration – such as wholesale importation of price-controlled medicines – would serve only to export jobs and cast significant doubt on the safety and efficacy of the products in America’s medicine cabinets.

We hope that the Biden Administration will support and protect the intellectual property rights that are the lifeblood of biopharmaceutical innovation and investment in the United States. Intellectual property protections enabled biopharmaceutical research companies to move quickly and effectively against COVID-19, and are the foundation for our ongoing efforts to help ensure new treatments and vaccines are accessible to those who need them. IP protections are actually allowing partners to more easily share technology and information to find new ways to fight the virus and scale-up manufacturing of vaccines. Undermining the very policies that have helped biopharmaceutical research companies move so quickly against the pandemic won’t provide meaningful relief for people and will leave us all less prepared to confront future public health threats. A better approach is to continue the intense collaboration already taking place between companies, governments and other partners around the world.


We fully support steps to strengthen healthcare affordability for all Americans. No one should be unable to access the medicines they need because of an inability to pay for them. We recommend, for example, that HHS allow the rule to go forward that would encourage pharmacy benefit managers (PBMs) to use negotiated drug discounts to directly lower costs for consumers. There are ways to improve patient affordability without slowing innovation or causing the loss of high-paying union jobs upon which many hard-working Americans rely.

We hope to continue this conversation in the coming months and to serve as a source of information and clarity on issues affecting both labor and the biopharmaceutical industry, particularly as efforts to combat COVID-19 continue. We look forward to working with you to improve the lives of Americans, protect public health, and build the world’s strongest and most sustainable innovation economy that will produce both cures and jobs.

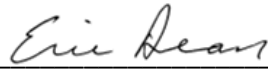
Signed:



Joseph Sellers, Jr., General President, International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail and Transportation Workers



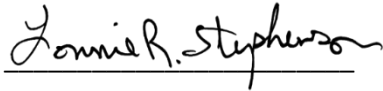
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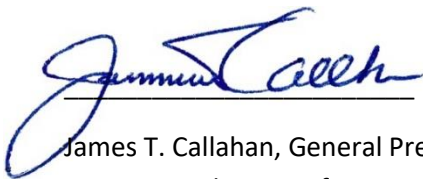
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