

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

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Joseph Sellers, Jr.
General President

September 28, 2022

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

I am reaching out today on behalf of the 203,000 members of the International Association of Sheet Metal, Air, Rail, and Transportation Workers (SMART) to request your help in protecting American workers. As you know, there is an ongoing effort at the World Trade Organization to expand its waiver of intellectual property protections for American-made Covid-19 vaccines to include American-made diagnostics and therapeutics. Expanding this so-called “TRIPS waiver” would have a negative impact on America’s union workers and their families, and I urge you to fight against these efforts by China, India, and other countries at the WTO that are seeking to take American jobs.

Union members played a crucial role in combating Covid-19. For example, SMART members converted existing hospital space and built field hospitals at the height of the pandemic, greatly expanding the U.S. healthcare system's capacity to treat a wave of sick patients who otherwise would not have received care. Well before the pandemic began, our members helped build the factories that ultimately manufactured Covid-19 therapeutics and vaccines.

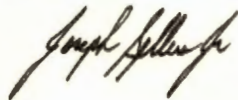
The TRIPS waiver gave cutting-edge American technology to foreign rivals, with the objective and expectation that those rivals would use that technology to build vaccine manufacturing facilities abroad. Because of this WTO decision, rather than American workers building new pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities here in the United States, foreign workers will build those plants in other countries.

Expanding the waiver to remove protections for additional American-made medical products would compound this problem. Hardworking Americans will lose out on jobs that, without these WTO waivers, would have gone to them. America’s union workers – not our competitors in China, India, and elsewhere – should reap the economic and employment benefits of American innovation and technology.

Through your Build Back Better agenda, the administration has lifted and championed skilled workers and American manufacturing. Our members strongly support these efforts. An expansion of the TRIPS waiver, however, would directly oppose these shared goals and its backbone of American workers.

We urge you to uphold the American workforce from unfair competition abroad by opposing the waiver expansion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Joseph Sellers, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Joseph Sellers, Jr.
General President

JS/ed

cc:

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
U.S. Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20230

The Honorable Katherine Tai
U.S. Trade Ambassador
600 17th Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20508

Mr. Ron Klain
Chief of Staff
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
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