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January 22, 2024

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
US Secretary of Commerce
1401 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20230

Dear Secretary Raimondo,

The International Association of Fire Fighters represents 343,000 fire fighters, paramedics, and officers across our nation. Our members are on the front line and are the first responders to every major disaster and medical emergency that our country and communities face. As an example, our members were at the forefront in treating and transporting COVID 19 patients during the pandemic. Regrettably, one hundred of our members perished in the line of duty from job connected exposures to COVID.

Our union has been a proud member of the Pharmaceutical Labor Management Association (PILMA) for over twenty years. Over the years, we have partnered with the industry to address the disposal of opioids and utilizing various drug therapies to treat our members with hypertension, stress, and various cancers. As the country's primary pre-hospital EMS responders, we recognize the value of research and innovation to bring new pharmaceuticals to market to save lives.

Various nations including China seek a waiver of intellectual property (IP) protections under the World Trade Association on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for COVID 19 treatments manufactured in the United States.

Our fundamental concern is that weakening IP protections so foreign competitors can copy and profit from technologies developed by US manufacturers will stifle or diminish further investment in the industry. We view this waiver attempt solely as a commercial strategy to create a market and siphon domestic jobs.

The manufacturing facilities in the United States are built to exacting standards and employ stringent quality control standards. We do not trust that facilities in other nations employ the same rigorous compliance and adherence to safety standards.

The United States benefits in terms of public health from the research and advances made by the pharmaceutical industry. As a labor union, the IAFF also recognizes that this industry provides many quality jobs for American workers both those are employed by various pharmaceutical companies and members of the building and

construction trades who build and maintain these facilities. Trading these benefits to offshore jobs and weakening safety standards is a losing strategy.

We urge the administration to reject the proposed TRIPS waiver.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Edward A. Kelly". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "E" and a long, sweeping underline.

Edward A. Kelly
General President