

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 16, 2020

Vice President Mike Pence
The White House
Office of the Vice President
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence:

We write to urge the Administration to take action to protect consumers' access to Food and Drug Administration (FDA)-regulated medical products and hygiene products recommended to help prevent the spread of the coronavirus (COVID-19) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) from supply chain disruptions created by the pandemic.

We have heard widespread reports – including from hospitals, health systems, and long-term care facilities in our state – that health care providers across the country are facing shortages of medical supplies like ventilators, masks, hand sanitizer, and soap. We have also heard about a shortage of supplies to run COVID-19 diagnostic tests in labs across Minnesota. In addition, consumers are facing similar shortages. While recent FDA guidance encouraging licensed pharmacists and physicians to compound batches of hand sanitizer may be helpful,^[1] it does little to address the underlying supply chain problems facing health care providers and consumers. Meanwhile, media reports indicate that a group representing major companies has raised concerns with both the State Department and the U.S. Trade Representative that disruptions of imports of certain chemicals and medical equipment could further compromise the United States' readiness to confront the coronavirus.^[2]

Amid this public health emergency, a steady and reliable supply of medical supplies and equipment is critical to ensuring that hospitals and health care systems can respond swiftly to the spread of COVID-19, that labs can run at full capacity to run diagnostic tests, and that members of the public can take commonsense precautions to protect themselves and their loved ones.

With this in mind, we respectfully ask the following questions:

- 1) What measures is the Administration taking to address supply chain disruption where there is a strong market reliance on FDA-regulated medical products manufactured abroad?

^[1] <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-03-14/hand-sanitizer-shortages-push-fda-to-let-pharmacists-make-it>

^[2] <https://www.cnn.com/2020/03/15/politics/supply-chain-shortages-coronavirus-pandemic/index.html>

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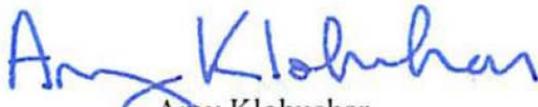
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- 2) Has the Administration issued guidance to hospitals, health systems, and long-term care facilities about how to access the National Strategic Stockpile and otherwise manage their inventory to ensure an adequate stockpile of supplies?
- 3) Has the Administration taken any measures to coordinate with major retailers and industry groups as well as state and local officials to ensure there is an adequate supply of hygiene products for consumers?

It is imperative that we protect the health and safety of the American people by ensuring we have the supplies and equipment necessary to treat and prevent the further spread of COVID-19.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent request.

Sincerely,


Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator


Tina Smith
U.S. Senator