

Jay Timmons
President and CEO

Sept. 17, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Jacob Sullivan
Assistant to the President for National
Security Affairs
National Security Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Gina Raimondo
Secretary of Commerce
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Brian Deese
Director
National Economic Council
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Katherine Tai
United States Trade Representative
600 17th St. NW
Washington, DC 20508

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients
Coordinator of the COVID-19 Response and
Counselor to the President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Blinken, Secretary Raimondo, Ambassador Tai, Mr. Sullivan, Mr. Deese and Mr. Zients:

Manufacturers share President Biden's commitment to ending the pandemic to save lives and livelihoods and protect our economic recovery. To advance these efforts, manufacturers urge the United States to build international consensus for effective, practical initiatives that leverage our trading capabilities to fight COVID-19 at home and abroad. By eliminating restrictions on the manufacturing and distribution of safe COVID-19 products, we can boost global efforts to fight the pandemic.

Manufacturers appreciate the actions taken by the Biden administration to deliver COVID-19 products and services to patients, including President Biden's [June 10 announcement](#) of plans to purchase and donate 500 million U.S.-manufactured vaccines around the world, the March 12 launch of a new "Quad Vaccine Partnership" for the Indo-Pacific region and [strong ongoing support](#) for COVAX efforts to ensure equitable vaccine distribution around the world.

These steps are critical, but more must be done. Manufacturers urge the United States to work with a growing body of countries to drive international consensus and support for effective, practical initiatives that leverage trade to support the global COVID-19 response ahead of the WTO's upcoming 12th Ministerial Conference. Trade policy can address core bottlenecks to manufacturing and distribution of COVID-19 products, promote critical global innovation and support manufacturers and workers in the United States in efforts to produce and export vaccines and other U.S.-made COVID-19-related products.

One example is the Trade in Health Initiative, a proposal from a group of countries that include U.S. allies such as Australia, Canada, the European Union and Japan. It proposes key areas for global activity, including efforts to:

- Limit export restrictions that at various points during the COVID-19 pandemic have disrupted U.S. manufacturing operations that produce health and other products critical to fighting the pandemic—and more broadly have hindered efforts by businesses and others to protect their workers and communities and remain open;
- Facilitate trade in products needed to fight COVID-19 by expanding the use of digital customs procedures, efforts to facilitate transportation and logistics, cooperation on regulations and standards and other measures;
- Work to eliminate or reduce, temporarily or permanently, tariffs on goods that are considered essential to fighting the COVID-19 pandemic; and
- Boost transparency among member states on trade measures adopted during COVID-19 to ensure that other member states are playing by the rules to ensure a level playing field for manufacturers and workers in the United States.

Other initiatives to fight COVID-19 and future pandemics include work to expand the scope and signatories for the “zero-for-zero initiative” originally signed during the World Trade Organization’s Uruguay Round, [tackle key trade bottlenecks](#) identified by the WTO and promote stronger regulatory cooperation to facilitate development and trade in COVID-19 health products and strengthen national health systems.

Such proposals would contribute directly to a more resilient supply of critical COVID-19 products and facilitate future pandemic response, unlike the controversial WTO proposal to waive global protections for all intellectual property related to a wide range of COVID-19 products. That proposed waiver would not solve the critical manufacturing and supply chain challenges. The waiver would, however, undermine the growing body of voluntary licensing agreements¹, both in effect and under negotiation, that are [accelerating manufacturing production to meet the world’s needs](#). The waiver would also undermine U.S. technology leadership against global competitors such as China, and it would restrict domestic investment in innovation in ways that could harm future pandemic responses and U.S. health security.

The United States must take a leading role in driving consensus on the critical role that trade can play in fighting COVID-19 around the world, matching the ambition of the United States’ broader diplomatic initiatives. The NAM and its members stand ready to work with you and your agencies on these efforts.

Sincerely,



Jay Timmons

¹ For examples of manufacturers’ efforts to partner across industry, with governments and with other entities, see [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).