

United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 27, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We are encouraged by the progress your Administration has made galvanizing international support for the global fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. As you have recognized, the U.S. has a moral obligation to lead the world in rapidly providing COVID vaccines to nations in need of these lifesaving shots, even as we provide vaccines to our own citizens. Your recent success at the UN General Assembly Vaccine Summit, during which leaders agreed to provide additional doses and funding for COVID response and the United States committed to a purchase of an additional 500 million doses, building on the world's largest-ever purchase and donation of vaccines by a single country, will surely be instrumental in spurring vaccinations in low- and lower-middle income nations, and, along with efforts to distribute medical devices, diagnostics, and other critical goods, will help to mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus and curb the pandemic around the world.

To complement these efforts, we urge you to work with allies to reduce or eliminate trade barriers to health products, including inputs used in vaccine manufacturing, vaccine distribution and approval, therapeutics and pharmaceuticals, diagnostics, personal protective equipment and medical devices. Some of the most intractable barriers affecting these products include tariffs, export restrictions, and customs red tape, which were highlighted by the WTO in its recent publication, "Indicative List of Trade-Related Bottlenecks and Trade-Facilitating Measures on Critical Products to Combat COVID-19." In a July statement of the Multilateral Leaders Task Force on COVID-19, the heads of the World Health Organization, the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank urged governments to address supply chain and trade bottlenecks. Breaking down these barriers and thereby enabling the quick and efficient distribution of vaccines and other medical goods around the globe will help us begin to put this pandemic in our rear-view mirror.

Negotiations at the World Trade Organization under the auspices of the trade and health initiative offer a critical path to achieve this objective. Several U.S. allies, including the European Union, Canada, and Japan, have put forward proposals to address export restrictions, reduce tariffs, and address other roadblocks. While the United States has offered a proposal to accelerate implementation of the Trade Facilitation Agreement, which we regard as a positive step, it has not yet tackled these other critical issues. To complement the work underway at the WTO, the U.S. should also play a leadership role in regional efforts, including in the Asia-Pacific and with the European Union. U.S. leadership on eliminating trade barriers to critical goods would provide a much needed boost for global cooperation on pandemic response.

The country has made great strides under your leadership managing the U.S. pandemic response. Working together, with the kind of smart policies detailed above, we are confident you can also lead the world in ending the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tom Carper". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath it.

Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "John Cornyn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line underneath it.

John Cornyn
United States Senator