



JILL BILLINGS

STATE REPRESENTATIVE

June 26, 2020

Alex Azar
Secretary of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue S.W.
Washington, D.C., 20201

Dear Secretary Azar,

As a state legislator in Wisconsin, I am writing to ask that you and the federal government urgently use all tools at your disposal to ensure that the medical and prescription needs of our citizens throughout the COVID-19 pandemic are affordable and in reliable supply.

To address the COVID-19 pandemic, and ensure citizens have the safety and freedom to live their daily lives, the federal government must ensure access to COVID-19 therapies, treatments, and vaccines when available. It is critically important that these medicines are made widely and equitably available as quickly as possible. It is imperative these medications are available through public programs like Medicare and Medicaid. Affordability should not be a barrier to the necessary treatment or vaccines.

Affordability should not be a barrier to an individual's access to other life-saving prescriptions as this time, such as insulin or asthma inhalers. Medical shortages of these prescription drugs threaten to raise the cost even more. Prior to the pandemic, constituents were already burdened with prescription drug prices. Now, with so many people facing financial hardship due to losing their job—and thusly losing income, health insurance coverage or both—individuals are faced with not being able to access the medicines that keep them alive. More than ever, citizens need the freedom to access and affordability of life saving medicines. As Secretary of Health and Human services you have an obligation to ensure that our nation's insured medical supplies and prescription drugs for both the health and economic safety of our citizens.

The government should use existing authorities, such as the Defense Production Act and 28 USC 1498, to ramp up production and clear patent monopolies that keep medicines priced out of reach. Previous experience has shown that using these powers can bring immediate relief. We urgently need help. I respectfully request you to immediately invoke these authorities to make medicines affordable and accessible. In particular, I ask you:

1. To activate immediately all U.S. public manufacturing facilities to produce any essential medicines in shortage.
2. To use Section 1498 immediately and break any patent monopoly on medicines and to allow for low-cost generic competition.



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3. To begin mass public production of COVID-19 treatments and vaccines that show early efficacy and to authorize multiple manufacturers to produce treatments and vaccines, using Section 1498 to eliminate patent monopolies.

These measures are of vial need for the health, safety and security of all citizens in the United States. As the Secretary of Health and Human Services as I request you ensure the health security of our citizens. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Billings". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jill Billings
Wisconsin State Representative
95th Assembly District