

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

Many scientists believe it is a question of when, not if, the next pandemic will occur. As the U.S. participates in the negotiation of the Pandemic Accord at the World Health Organization (WHO), we urge you to push for strong, binding equitable access standards to ensure that tests, treatments, and vaccines for the next global public health threat are available to everyone who needs them as soon as possible.

We must act on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nearly [15 million](#) people died during the first two years of the pandemic. Most tragically, millions of people died needlessly after the vaccines were developed, but before they became widely available in low-and-middle income countries. Major manufacturers chose not to share the vaccine recipe to expand global production. As a result, it took over a year after the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines were first authorized by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration for enough doses to reach developing countries—if they could [afford them at all](#).

But vaccine inequity did not just hurt people abroad. Major gaps in access to vaccines globally also increased the risk of deadly new variants that changed the course of the pandemic at home. One study by [Yale researchers](#) found that, by the time the U.S. recorded one million deaths, over 40% of the deaths — approximately 430,000 — were caused by three COVID-19 variants first detected outside of the U.S.

The Pandemic Accord negotiations at the WHO present an historic opportunity to prepare for future pandemics, to protect lives and livelihoods, and to demonstrate political leadership the world will long remember. The international community agrees that we must do more to accelerate research into new tests, treatments, and vaccines and to make sure these products are available globally. We urge you to build on the progress already made by your administration and champion three foundational commitments:

1. **Pharmaceutical companies should not be allowed to charge outrageous prices for products developed with taxpayer dollars.** Last December, you announced a [“fair pricing”](#) standard for drugs developed for public health emergencies. This should be expanded to apply to low-and-middle income countries, and formalized as a concrete global obligation on governments whenever they fund research.

2. **When the public funds information that can help end a pandemic, it should not be kept a secret.** In May 2022, you announced that the U.S. National Institutes of Health would share some [COVID technology](#) with the WHO. A specific obligation on governments to “pool” pandemic technology together reciprocally could allow scientists around the world to work together to develop cures faster, and allow more manufacturers to ramp up production during shortages of medical products.
  
3. **The U.S. should support countries that take steps to increase access to pandemic products.** In May 2021, your administration announced it supported a temporary waiver of the World Trade Organization’s Agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) for COVID vaccines. Monopolies create artificial scarcity. When a deadly virus is spreading, governments should be encouraged to use all available tools to expand access to tests, treatments and vaccines.

The case of Moderna serves as a powerful reminder for why American leadership is so critical. Moderna worked hand-in-hand with scientists at the U.S. National Institutes of Health to invent the COVID vaccine. U.S. taxpayers spent \$12 billion to research, develop and procure the vaccine. Yet Moderna refused to share its technology with other manufacturers to increase global production, charged some poorer countries more for doses than wealthy countries, and then quadrupled the price of the COVID vaccine to \$128—at a time when it costs just \$2.85 to manufacture the vaccine.

A fairer, more equitable response to the next public health outbreak is in everyone’s interest. By supporting strong, binding equitable access standards, you can help make sure the next pandemic is shorter and less deadly than the last.

Sincerely,



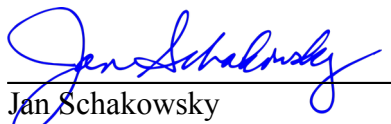
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Bernard Sanders  
United States Senator



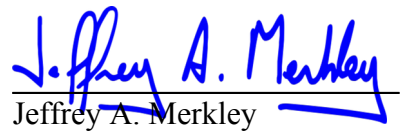
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



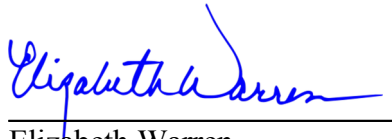
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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

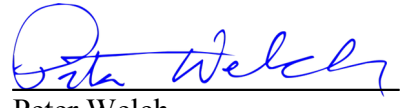


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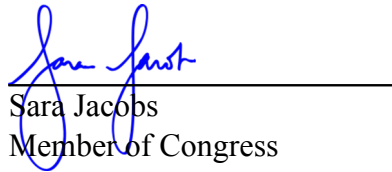
Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



Cori Bush  
Member of Congress

cc:

The Honorable Antony Blinken, U.S. Secretary of State

The Honorable Xavier Becerra, U.S. Secretary of Health & Human Services

The Honorable Gina Raimondo, U.S. Secretary of Commerce

The Honorable Ambassador Katherine Tai, U.S. Trade Representative

The Honorable Ambassador Pamela Hamamoto, U.S. Negotiator for the Pandemic Accord