



May 25, 2022

Dear Senators:

Pursuing lower prescription drug prices for Americans is a laudable goal, but ransacking foreign medicine cabinets and importing market-distorting, socialist price controls are not the answers.

- First, there is no guarantee that the prices of prescription drugs would even go down in the United States or that any savings would be passed along to patients. Former Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar said, “Importing drugs from other countries, such as Canada... is a gimmick,” and he cited the minuscule savings calculated by the Congressional Budget Office. Former FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb said that the scheme would add “so much cost to the imported drugs; they wouldn’t be much cheaper than drugs sold inside our closed American system.”
- Second, there is no guarantee that imported drugs would be safe. Drug importation undoubtedly would make American patients less safe because importing drugs from other countries would expose Americans to the very real possibility of being poisoned with the opioids that have wreaked havoc across our nation and the very real possibility of being poisoned with substandard, falsified, and counterfeit drugs. Indeed, experts estimate that one in ten medicines worldwide is counterfeit, and the FDA has estimated that 99.1% of drug products entering the U.S. by mail in 2019 were non-compliant with agency standards. Canadian officials have said that they don’t have the resources to check the safety of drugs from foreign countries that are routed through Canada to hide their true country of origin in order to evade international trade rules and American drug-safety standards.
- Third, Canada is not on board with the importation scheme. “Canada does not support actions that could adversely affect the supply of prescription drugs in Canada and potentially raise costs of prescription drugs for Canadians,” reads an April 2019 briefing for Canadian officials, and this sentiment has been reiterated more recently. Moreover, the organization Innovative Medicines Canada says, “Canada cannot supply medicines and vaccines to a market ten times larger than its own population without jeopardizing Canadian supplies and causing shortages.”
- Fourth, drug importation amounts to importing European-style price controls, which have led to deadly shortages and lapses in patient care. Nearly 90 percent of drugs launched worldwide in the last eight years are available in the United States. In contrast, only 66 percent are available in the United Kingdom, and fewer than half are available in Canada.
- Fifth, U.S. medical innovation relies on market pricing and intellectual property protection. Drug importation would introduce socialist price controls and trample on intellectual property rights. Indeed, the scheme ultimately would quash innovation and put in danger the very patients it seeks to help.

In short, foreign medicine cabinets aren’t all that full, or cheap, or safe.

These are just some of the reasons that drug importation schemes must be opposed. Americans deserve a plan to reduce prescription drug prices that preserves consumer access, market pricing, and patient safety.

Thank you,

Kent Kaiser, Ph.D.  
Executive Director