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## United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

August 31, 2021

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
Coronavirus Response Coordinator  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. Zients:

I write to bring your attention to concerns raised by state governments, essential U.S. businesses with overseas workforces and operations, and diaspora communities across the United States about the urgent need to expedite both sales and sharing of excess U.S. COVID-19 vaccines prior to expiration, including by allowing for direct commercial procurement and export.

American ingenuity has produced highly effective COVID-19 vaccines that have the potential to stop the current pandemic in its tracks. It is necessary to ensure adequate stocks of the vaccines to meet the needs of the American people, yet the emergence and spread of highly infectious variants has made it painfully clear that the American people cannot be safe if the pandemic rages on elsewhere. We therefore must simultaneously act to expand vaccine access overseas.

The administration is to be commended for recognizing this need, and for sharing millions of excess vaccine doses through bilateral agreements with key partners and allies, and through the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) mechanism. Still, donations to foreign governments and multilateral mechanisms are just one tool in our arsenal. It is time to deploy the power and ingenuity of the private sector.

My office has repeatedly been told that the U.S. stockpile of COVID-19 vaccines is secure and that no export restrictions, whether de facto or de jure, currently exist. Still, foreign governments eager to procure U.S.-manufactured COVID-19 vaccines are struggling to secure supply and U.S. companies – including essential businesses – are unable to secure vaccines for their overseas workforce. I understand multiple governments and companies have sought your assistance in securing supply for export, to no avail. Moreover, states and localities holding excess vaccines with rapidly approaching expiration dates lack guidance for how they can repurpose such vaccines, and private sector actors with the capacity to secure these stocks for overseas distribution have been turned away.

I urge you to redouble your efforts to expand overseas access to U.S.-developed and manufactured COVID-19 vaccines, particularly by establishing a mechanism for states and localities to repurpose excess stocks for overseas distribution prior to expiration, and by removing any remaining

The Honorable Jeffrey Zients  
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obstacles to the procurement and export of U.S. vaccines by key allies and partners, as well as private sector actors, even while securing the U.S. stockpile.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "James E. Risch". The signature is stylized with a large, looped initial "J" and a cursive "Risch".

JAMES E. RISCH  
Ranking Member  
Senate Foreign Relations Committee