

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 21, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pence  
Vice President of the United States  
The White House  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Vice President Pence,

We write to express concern regarding the domestic supply chain for materials, such as hypodermic needles, required to deliver a COVID-19 vaccine. It is absolutely critical that we are prepared to properly administer and disseminate a vaccine the moment it becomes available. Unfortunately, it appears that we may not be on track to obtain the necessary delivery systems to administer a vaccine widely across the population. I urge you to work with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Department of Health and Human Services to ensure that the federal government obtains the materials to meet the demand for a vaccine when it becomes available.

It is our understanding that FEMA has issued a solicitation for only finished goods, estimated at approximately 35-75 million across all suppliers, of readily available hypodermic needles, which have not yet been ordered due to FEMA's focus on procuring other materials. Industry partners in our state have indicated that the amount requested in FEMA's solicitation and the timing of the award are both woefully inadequate to address the eventual need in administering the vaccine. If an award were issued today for future products, the industry would need approximately 18 months to secure materials and complete production of these supplies, and it is estimated that we will need 600 million hypodermic needles to administer the vaccine in the United States.

Meanwhile, our domestic supply chain is fielding orders for these supplies from other countries and the raw materials necessary to produce finished goods are in high demand. If FEMA does not act quickly, the United States may be too far behind to meet the demand for an eventual vaccine. We are also concerned that the challenges in procuring these materials have been exacerbated by a lack of clarity as to which federal agency is responsible for contracting with industry. Industry leaders and our offices have received conflicting information as to whether the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, which would typically handle these procurements, or FEMA is leading the effort to obtain vaccine delivery systems.

The administration's current procurement strategy for COVID-19 vaccine delivery systems is likely to leave the country at risk of being unable to administer a vaccine when it becomes available. We have already witnessed the public health consequences of the lack of testing supplies for COVID-19. The federal government must take action now to ensure that we are not in a similar position when it comes to a COVID-19 vaccine. Administering this vaccine will be

essential in guaranteeing a return to normalcy for the American people and preventing the tragic loss of life we have witnessed across the country.

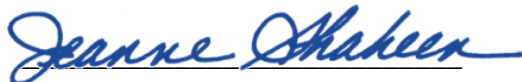
In light of these concerns, we request that you provide the following information:

1. Please describe the administration's plan for ensuring that hypodermic needles and other essential materials for use in conjunction with a COVID-19 vaccine will be available by the time the COVID-19 vaccine is ready for use in the United States.
2. Please provide details on any administrative and regulatory barriers that are preventing a faster timeline for completion of contract awards for the acquisition of hypodermic needles and other essential supplies for the COVID-19 vaccine.

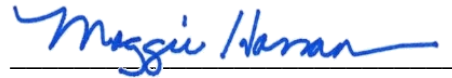
We recognize that the COVID-19 pandemic has created an unprecedented need to prioritize the procurement of personal protective equipment and other materials to address the situation on the ground right now; however, we must be able to pursue both lines of effort simultaneously. We stand ready to provide additional resources in Congress should you identify those needed to procure the delivery systems for a vaccine.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



JEANNE SHAHEEN  
United States Senator



MARGARET WOOD HASSAN  
United States Senator

CC:

The Honorable Peter Gaynor, Administrator, U.S. Federal Emergency Management Agency  
The Honorable Alex Azar, Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
The Honorable Eric Hargan, Deputy Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services