

United States Senate

May 28, 2020

The Honorable Alex Azar
Secretary
Department of Health and Human Services
200 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

As the federal government addresses the current impact of COVID-19, I write today to urge you and the other agencies involved in the federal health response to not lose sight of the threat presented by the 2020-2021 influenza (“flu”) season.

For a typical season, flu vaccine manufacturers will make about 140,000,000 to 160,000,000 doses for the United States market. However, health experts have noted that this amount may not be enough to meet increased demand, as Americans rightfully seek to protect themselves, their loved ones, and their communities through greater flu vaccination rates.

Specifically, my concern is that, if federal public health entities and vaccine manufacturers are not ready for this increased demand, there may be temporary shortages of flu vaccines, especially early in the upcoming flu season.

I urge you to anticipate this problem and work with vaccine manufacturers and healthcare providers to meet this increased demand. Further, I encourage you and the other entities of our federal public health infrastructure to work closely with vaccine manufacturers, providers, underserved groups, and state and local partners to better coordinate flu vaccination awareness campaigns, methods to extend vaccinations throughout the flu season, and means to manufacture, distribute, and administer sufficient quantities of vaccines to meet this anticipated demand. Finally, I encourage you to use present federal resources, such as the Strategic National Stockpile, as a backstop for atypical excess doses at the end of the 2020-2021 season.

Time is of the essence. If you lack statutory authority or appropriations to ensure adequate supply during the upcoming flu season, delineate these inadequacies to Congress. The Senate stands ready to help.

I look forward to your response and working with you to better protect the American people during the upcoming 2020-2021 flu season.

Sincerely,



Ted Cruz
United States Senator

CC:

The Honorable Stephen Hahn, M.D.
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration

The Honorable Robert Redfield, M.D.
Director
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention