

Letter to Pharma Companies Urging Collaborative Approach in Covid-19 Response

As shareholders and members of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility who have been engaging [company] on access to medicines for over two decades, we recognize that we are experiencing an unprecedented pandemic that is exacting a devastating toll on people worldwide and challenging the health care structures and systems that enable all of us thrive. We appreciate the resources <company> is quickly devoting to the global efforts to find appropriate diagnostics, treatment and prevention of COVID-19. Given the critical role that the pharmaceutical industry plays in the research and development of health technologies, we urge <company> to consider the following:

Adopt a collaborative approach to the design and delivery of health technologies:

- Share compounds, assets and data with researchers to accelerate the development of diagnostics, treatments and a vaccine;
- Widely register products as candidates for diagnostics, vaccines and medicines;
- Support governments' decisions to issue compulsory licenses to ensure affordable prices;
- Issue voluntary licenses and explore licensing agreements with existing organizations to facilitate access;
- Support low- and middle-income countries, as they lack resources to adequately respond to the COVID-19 threat by not enforcing intellectual property rights;
- Commit to enhance manufacturing and supply chains as well as scale up operations to meet the need and prevent shortages globally; and
- Advocate for the U.S. government and other relevant actors to support collaborative efforts among countries, including the call for global pooling for IP rights to any COVID-19 related technologies, as the President and Minister of Health of Costa Rica recently proposed to the WHO.

Govern with financial prudence and a commitment to uphold your social license to operate by ensuring affordable access for all: Public funding globally has played a pivotal role in biopharmaceutical research and development (R&D) to treat and prevent coronaviruses. In the U.S. alone, taxpayers have spent nearly \$700 million since 2002, and this substantial public investment has been instrumental in laying the groundwork for the COVID-19 response^[1]. To date, the U.S government has refused to provide assurance that any vaccines or treatments for COVID-19 would be affordable for all, which is clearly unacceptable. To that end, we expect companies to govern with the highest financial ethical responsibility.

Maintain commitment to data quality and patient safety: Companies should continue to emphasize the need to evaluate safety, quality and appropriate use of products while accelerating both research and delivery. While speeding up the development of vaccines and medicines is of the utmost urgency, this should not come at the expense of patient safety.

As investors, we want the companies in which we invest to be successful, which includes putting your customers and patients first given that you derive your social license to operate from your contribution to public health. The current pandemic offers [company] an opportunity to demonstrate congruence between company mission, strategy and operations to address the most devastating public health crisis in a century. We trust that you will take the right steps in collaboration with other stakeholders to ensure equitable access across populations and geographies, and to quickly and safely scale up diagnostic measures, treatments and when available, a vaccine.

We look forward to a day where life returns to normal and our ongoing dialogue can continue, but in the meantime, we hope that you, your families and your employees are safe and well.

[1] Public Citizen, “Blind Spot: How the COVID-19 Outbreak Shows the Limits of Pharma’s Monopoly Model,” February 20, 2020. <https://www.citizen.org/article/blind-spot/>