



**INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS®**

900 Seventh Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001
202.833.7000
www.ibew.org

LONNIE R. STEPHENSON
International President

KENNETH W. COOPER
International
Secretary-Treasurer

October 7, 2022

VIA EMAIL

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
Secretary
U.S. Department of Commerce
1401 Constitution Ave NW
Washington, DC 20230

Re: TRIPS Waiver Expansion

Dear Secretary Raimondo:

I am deeply concerned that the World Trade Organization's recent decision to waive intellectual property rights on Covid-19 vaccines will harm American workers, and I fear the WTO may soon compound the damage by expanding the waiver to Covid-19 treatments and diagnostic tools. I strongly urge your office to protect American laborers by opposing any such expansion.

This organization strongly endorsed President Biden's vision of a worker-centered trade agenda – one that fosters U.S. global competitiveness while supporting American jobs.¹ I embrace the Administration's agenda of strengthening the middle class.²

Giving away U.S. intellectual property undermines that agenda. The WTO waiver authorizes companies in any developing country, including manufacturing powerhouses like China and India, to make copycats of products developed in the United States.

It took U.S. companies and universities decades of research and billions of dollars in investment to develop the mRNA technology behind two of the leading Covid-19 vaccines. Giving away such prize inventions harms these U.S. institutions, along with the skilled union workers they employ.

Enabling foreign countries to bolster their domestic industries also makes U.S. companies less competitive and drives down wages here, while doing nothing to save lives. IBEW members directly benefit from robust domestic biopharmaceutical innovation, installing and maintaining electrical infrastructure in pharmaceutical research and manufacturing facilities around the United States.

As workers in the electrical trades, this organization labors in fields ranging from manufacturing to broadcasting and telecommunications. All of these, and

¹ <https://www.wita.org/atp-research/worker-centric-trade-agenda/>

² <https://www.whitehouse.gov/build-back-better/>





**INTERNATIONAL
BROTHERHOOD
OF ELECTRICAL
WORKERS®**

The Honorable Gina M. Raimondo
October 7, 2022
Page 2

many more, would be harmed by eroding the intellectual property rights that uphold so much of the U.S. economy.

I urge the administration to keep American jobs in America, as it promised, and oppose any further weakening of intellectual property rights.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lonnie R. Stephenson". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Lonnie R. Stephenson
International President

LRS:efw

Copy to Katherine Tai, U.S. Trade Representative
Martin J. Walsh, Secretary, U.S. Department of Labor
Ronald Klain, Assistant to the President and Chief of Staff

