



May 13, 2020

The Honorable Robert E. Lighthizer  
U.S. Trade Representative  
Office of the U.S. Trade Representative  
600 17th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20508

**Re: Comments of the Healthcare Supply Chain Association (HSCA) on USTR Request for Comments on Additional Tariff Exclusions for COVID-19 Response [Docket No. USTR–2020–0014]**

Dear Ambassador Lighthizer:

On behalf of the Healthcare Supply Chain Association (HSCA), we appreciate the opportunity to provide comments to the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) on additional modifications of actions regarding Chinese exports under Section 301. HSCA is dedicated to supporting patient care and ensuring healthcare providers have access to critical medical supplies needed to support our nation’s healthcare preparedness and response efforts amidst COVID-19 pandemic.

HSCA represents the nation’s leading healthcare group purchasing organizations (GPOs), the sourcing and purchasing partners to virtually all of America’s 7,000+ hospitals, as well as the vast majority of the 68,000+ long-term care facilities, surgery centers, clinics, and other healthcare providers. GPOs work with healthcare providers to negotiate competitive prices and support a safe and reliable supply of products. The value and services that GPOs provide allow healthcare providers and physicians to focus on their core mission: providing first-class patient care. As the United States continues to address the spread of the coronavirus, it is critical that we ensure our nation’s healthcare providers are equipped to treat and prevent the spread of this disease and support patient care.

The current COVID-19 pandemic has placed enormous stress on hospitals, other healthcare providers and the communities they serve. GPOs work alongside healthcare providers to combat these difficult challenges, including data tracking to best understand needs and supply coordination efforts to help medical teams obtain much needed supplies. As an industry with a proven track record of providing critical support during emergencies like Hurricane Harvey, the California wildfires and the Ebola outbreak, GPOs are committed to helping America’s healthcare providers and public authorities confront difficult challenges to support patient care.

HSCA MEMBERS





HSCA appreciates USTR’s efforts to-date to implement a number of tariff exclusions for COVID-19-related products, including medical gowns, gloves, and related personal protection equipment (PPE). As part of our fight to further combat COVID-19, we encourage the exclusion of additional medical products so as not to adversely impact the public health and emergency preparedness and response efforts or increase healthcare costs for all stakeholders. Remaining products on the tariff list include other personal protection equipment as well as device technologies and components (including diagnostic equipment and testing related supplies) that healthcare providers need to diagnose and treat patients and fight COVID-19.

Given our unique line of sight over the healthcare supply chain, HSCA respectfully submits the following recommendations for your consideration.

**USTR Should Consider Additional Medical Goods Needed to Combat COVID-19**

HSCA applauds the USTR for actions taken thus far to exclude tariff actions on key medical-related imports. As the USTR considers this docket, we note that many items subject to the tariff actions are components for important diagnostic and medical technologies used to identify and combat the spread of COVID-19 and are also instrumental in developing a vaccine. HSCA respectfully urges USTR to continue to exclude such medical products in order to safeguard public health and ensure uninterrupted patient care at this time of unprecedented need.

As the U.S. International Trade Commission outlined in its April 30, 2020 report, there are many COVID-19 relevant products that remain subject to Section 301 tariffs. These products include diagnostic test reagents and instruments used in testing for COVID-19, additional personal protective equipment, disinfectant and sterilization products, medical imaging and related equipment, and other critical ancillary supplies. While these products nor associated tariffs are limited to China, USTR actions to exclude these products will be a positive step to supporting our frontline healthcare providers’ fight against COVID-19 while working to strengthen and increase the resiliency of the supply chain.

**USTR Should Consider a Streamlined Approach to Execution to Aid COVID-19 Response Efforts**

Healthcare providers and researchers are vigorously working to meet the needs of COVID-19 patients and medical product innovators are working to develop treatments and a vaccine. Rather than a case-by-case review and consideration process, HSCA suggests that USTR move on the International Trade Commission (ITC) list of remaining medical products, which will result in a simplified and streamlined approach that can be readily adopted for the COVID-19 response. An exclusionary approach whereby only products that would not be categorically used in COVID-19 care would remain subject to tariffs could be readily implemented to support frontline response efforts and access to, and development of, critical medical products.

**HSCA MEMBERS**





American healthcare providers rely on a predictable and continuous supply of drugs, devices and other supplies to effectively treat patients. As USTR considers additional modifications to the list of products that are subject to tariffs under Section 301 at this time of increased demand during the pandemic, we respectfully urge USTR to swiftly move to exclude remaining healthcare products used in combating COVID-19 to support providers and the patients they serve.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our perspective, and we look forward to continuing to work with USTR to ensure patient and provider access to essential healthcare supplies. Please do not hesitate to contact me directly if HSCA can be a resource on this issue going forward. I can be reached at (202) 629-5833 or [info@supplychainassociation.org](mailto:info@supplychainassociation.org).

Sincerely,

Khatereh Calleja, J.D.  
President & CEO  
Healthcare Supply Chain Association (HSCA)

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