



October 7, 2022

Dear Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation:

On behalf of the Washington Council on International Trade, I write regarding the World Trade Organization's (WTO) June 2022 decision to waive intellectual property protections on Covid-19 vaccines.¹ In December, the WTO may decide to extend the waiver to Covid-19 diagnostics and therapeutics as well.² The Biden administration has not yet announced its position on this proposed expansion, and I urge you to oppose extension of the waiver.

Supporters of an expanded waiver assert that it would provide more equitable access to treatment across the globe -- the same argument they advanced in favor of the vaccine waiver.³ The real-world evidence simply does not support the claims, and if the expanded waiver goes forward, it will harm medical innovation, and could eliminate jobs in production and manufacturing in Washington state.

Strong IP protections brought Covid-19 vaccines and therapeutics to patients. Without robust protections, companies would not have invested the billions of dollars needed to create these lifesaving products. Nor would companies have formed hundreds of voluntary partnerships across the globe that produced the current global glut of vaccine doses.⁴⁵⁶ Unfortunately, it appears the same results are beginning to unfold with Covid-19 diagnostic tools and treatments.

Extending the waiver will do nothing to boost global public health. But it will punish the U.S. scientists, businesses, and workers who brought these medical breakthroughs to patients around the world.

As you know, Washington state has more than 1,100 life-science businesses and research organizations contribute more than \$30 billion in total economic impact to the state annually,

¹ https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news22_e/trip_08jul22_e.htm

² https://www.wto.org/english/news_e/news22_e/trip_08jul22_e.htm

³ <https://reliefweb.int/report/world/msf-governments-negotiating-wto-get-it-right-and-adopt-real-trips-waiver>

⁴ <https://archive.bio.org/toolkit/infographics/covid-19-vaccine-supply-chain-how-we-are-vaccinating-globe>

⁵ <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/india/india-likely-to-utilise-only-half-of-vaccine-produced-in-december/articleshow/87857780.cms>

⁶ <https://fortune.com/2022/05/11/covid-19-vaccines-global-surplus-new-variants/>

supporting more than 100,000 jobs.⁷ They include not only scientists and researchers, but also tens of thousands of union jobs in the skilled trades -- plumbers, electricians, pipefitters, and sheet metal workers at burgeoning biotech facilities.

Washington has a lot to lose from expanding the WTO waiver. I respectfully urge your opposition to further expansion of the WTO's waiver.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lori Otto Punke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Lori" being the most prominent.

Lori Otto Punke
President
Washington Council on International Trade

⁷ <https://www.geekwire.com/2021/industry-data-life-sciences-employment-rises-23-5-washington-state-2015-2019/>