

October 19, 2021

Brian Deese
Director
National Economic Council

Dear Mr. Deese:

The Biden-Harris Administration's recently issued outline, [*American Pandemic Preparedness: Transforming Our Capabilities*](#), provides important insight into the whole-of-government work underway to ensure the U.S. responds rapidly and effectively in the event of a future pandemic.

We are writing to both commend your efforts and to advocate for our industries' inclusion as an integral stakeholder in the pandemic response development process. The undersigned organizations represent the consumer packaged goods (CPG), food and beverage and agriculture industries. Our industries make the products Americans use every day.

COVID-19 dramatically underscored the role of essential consumer products during times of national emergency. Our industries worked diligently to meet demand for products indispensable to pandemic response like food, beverages, disinfectants, cleansers, hand sanitizer, toilet paper and more. These essential items are critically important to the sustainability of our nation's health care facilities, and vital to the commercial and community services necessary for critical infrastructure. Most importantly, these products are necessary in the execution of effective vaccination campaigns and are all but required among those occupations in all essential sectors where there is an unavoidable risk of exposures.

Keeping pace with consumer demand revealed supply chain vulnerabilities and highlighted policies ripe for improvement. Moreover, surging emergency demand for PPE and other critical supplies meant supply chains for healthcare and first responder workforces competed and conflicted with overlapping CPG supply chains and key manufacturing inputs. This added another layer of complexity that had to be addressed to ensure retail stores were stocked.

COVID-19 taught us that CPG products are essential to a future pandemic response. With this in mind, the industry encourages the Administration to consider the following specific areas as part of your plan development.

- **Strengthen CPG Supply Chains.** Disruptions to CPG supply chains create widespread and long-lasting harm to American families and the economy. We believe creating a federal Office of Supply Chain to streamline government decision-making and encourage a strategic approach to supply chain policy can help prevent such disruptions. Importantly, the *American Pandemic Preparedness* document released on September 3, 2021 calls for centralized "Mission Control"-style management of pandemic response. We are aligned with this approach, and in this spirit, we encourage establishing a national supply chain office and a supply chain performance dashboard to provide real-time intelligence and data to guide decisions during a future crisis. A dashboard will provide vital national consumer product data to a pandemic "Mission Control," in addition to the vital information for the public health community.

- **Streamline Federal Regulatory Coordination and Communication.** The coordination between departments and agencies during the COVID-19 crisis was, at times, inefficient, which caused uncertainty. The “Mission Control” approach envisioned by *American Pandemic Preparedness* is the correct one. As a highly regulated industry, it will be particularly important to provide CPG manufacturers centralized federal guidance on issues such as employee testing, labeling compliance, facility inspections, and broader public health guidelines. The lesson of COVID-19 is clear: a patchwork state approach is a prescription for confusion when clarity is needed most.
- **Create a National Reserve of Cleaning and Personal Care Products.** Shortages of key cleaning, disinfecting and personal care products were a particularly painful challenge driven by COVID-19. Demand spikes caused shortages not only among consumers, but among essential workforces, which put them in competition with first responders and front-line healthcare workers. Building a national stockpile of such products for the critical infrastructure workforces use should be a priority as we plan and prepare for future pandemics.
- **Coordinate Action Against Food and Essential Goods Insecurity.** The economic shock of COVID-19 triggered widespread food and essential goods insecurity, generating long lines at community food banks and emergency expansion of state and federal assistance programs. The CPG industry believes a robust federal plan can help prevent this from recurring in a future pandemic. The Bipartisan Policy Center released a [valuable report](#) on food and nutrition insecurity during COVID-19, including smart federal policy recommendations. We encourage access to cleaning and personal care products alongside food staples given their vital role during a public health crisis.

The CPG industry commends the Biden-Harris Administration’s comprehensive efforts to prepare now for future pandemics. One crucially important lesson of COVID-19 was that robust production and supply of essential consumer products is vital to an efficient and effective pandemic response. Front-line workers will have the products they need, and Americans can safely adhere to public health recommendations to accelerate the pandemic’s end.

As a willing partner and representing the CPG, food and beverage and agriculture industries, we look forward to working together as you develop the nation’s pandemic readiness plan.

Please contact us with any questions or to continue this important dialogue.

Sincerely,

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