



November 5, 2019

The Honorable Alex Azar  
Secretary, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
200 Independence Avenue S.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20201

Dear Secretary Azar:

We write to you with great concern over America's low supply of Vincristine, a critical drug that treats cancer in children. Recently, Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, one of the largest drug manufacturers worldwide, made a ["business decision"](#) to discontinue Vincristine, despite that it is one of only two suppliers of the drug. Now, doctors are [sounding the alarm](#) to say that time is running out to stop a true shortage crisis. As the head of the Department of Health and Human Services, we implore you to intervene to help save the lives of thousands of children who depend on this important drug.

As pharmaceutical industry profits soar, drug companies are continuing to [raise](#) the cost of medications on sick Americans and contributing to critical drug and medical supply shortages. Because of this, doctors and patients alike are faced with the realities of rationing life-saving medication. Research shows [one in three](#) uninsured Americans don't take their medication as prescribed in order to reduce costs of prescriptions and [one in four](#) people living with diabetes ration insulin and have asked their doctors for cheaper alternatives. Doctors should not be forced to alter their recommended treatment course for children battling cancer -- especially if that treatment is working -- because of a pharmaceutical company's unwavering greed.

Vincristine is a vital component of many children's treatment plans. It has a proven track record of success, which is why it is listed as one of the world's most [essential medicines](#). Medications that literally save children's lives should not be cost-prohibitive in the United States. That means we need your department to stand up to the drug giants attempting to raise profit margins at the expense of some of our youngest, most vulnerable citizens.

If you do not act, access to Vincristine could decrease further and have devastating consequences for children with cancer. Ensuring the continuity of care for these fragile lives is of the utmost importance. With a limited supply of Vincristine, hospitals and doctors will be forced to ration the medication, potentially delaying kids' treatment. [Research](#) shows that when treatment schedules are disrupted, cancer patients face an increased chance of relapse. No parent with a sick child should be faced with this horrifying possibility because of a supply issue.

As the secretary overseeing Americans' health care and as a former executive at one of the most notable pharmaceutical companies in the world, your access to key decision-makers is

unparalleled. We implore you to reach into your broad network to ensure America doesn't run out of the drug saving the lives of our children.

The risk of inaction is too high. The clock is ticking on sick children's lives. We urge you to step in and protect our kids.

Sincerely,

Lizzy Price  
Director, Restore Public Trust