
Submitted via email: Solicitation.questions@ahca.myflorida.com

June 25, 2019

Crystal Demott
Procurement Director
Agency for Health Care Administration
2727 Mahan Drive
Tallahassee, FL 32308

Re: Agency for Health Care Administration (AHCA) Request for Information 003-18/19: Canadian Drug Importation Proposal

Dear Ms. Demott,

America is the medical innovation capital of the world leading groundbreaking research, quality of care, and most importantly access to lifesaving treatments, with Florida leading efforts in the areas of clinical trials and research being conducted at our state universities. Unfortunately, many find it difficult to afford their medications and innovative therapies due to rising out-of-pocket costs.

As the President & CEO of the Florida State Hispanic Chamber, we represent the interests of over 604,000 Hispanic-owned businesses across the state that together contribute in excess of \$90 billion to Florida's economy each year. Healthcare is a top concern for our members, and we are constantly looking at proposals to lower out-of-pocket costs for employees, but also lower costs for our businesses who invest in the healthcare for their employees.

The Canadian Drug Importation Proposal affects the safety of our drug supply, with little hope of savings to the consumer.

In a editorial by the Wall Street Journal, the Editorial Board stated, "When federal importation was floated in the early 2000s, an FDA analysis found that five of seven of America's best-selling generic drugs for chronic conditions were cheaper than Canadian generics. One product didn't have a generic available in Canada. This analysis is outdated but the basics are still relevant: Nine in 10 prescriptions in the U.S. are generic, versus roughly 70% in Canada, which means the U.S. enjoys much higher savings from generics."

Importation proposals miss the mark on cost-savings – and can go a step further by also affecting the safety of the supply chain.

Importing medications that are not approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) would put Floridians at risk by creating an opening in the domestic drug supply to unsafe, counterfeit, or sub-standard medicines. The results could range from an increased flow of foreign drugs of unknown origin that differ from U.S. versions, to weakened intellectual property protections that circumvent existing international standards.

According to a statement from the National Association of Boards of Pharmacy, Canada “prohibits the filling of prescriptions issued by U.S. practitioners.” Medicines shipped to the United States by online Canadian-based pharmacies, even when operating with a legitimate Health Canada issued license, fall outside the FDA’s regulatory jurisdiction. Attempts to legalize importation in this manner would prevent the FDA from ensuring the safety and effectiveness of Florida’s medications.

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP Global) has also been vocal reporting that there are approximately 35,000 online pharmacies in existence today. ASOP Global found that more than 96% fail to comply with applicable laws and approximately 10% sell controlled substances. Despite common stipulations that controlled substances would be ineligible for importation, loopholes exist in the foreign drug supply chain.

As AHCA reviews vendors and applications for this program, we encourage due diligence in this review and consider these concerns. We must look to innovative strategies to directly reduce out-of-pocket spending at the pharmacy counter – this program misses the mark.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Julio Fuentes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Julio Fuentes
President and CEO
Florida State Hispanic Chamber of Commerce