



CPW-UAW

A UNION FOR POSTDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS AT COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY



CPW-UAW Local 4100 appeals the WTO and worldwide leaders to support the TRIPS Waiver for COVID-19 Treatments & Vaccines

Over the last 18 months we have seen the devastating effects of the COVID-19 pandemic, with a terrible death toll and the still unknown psychological effects. Thanks to a worldwide response we have also seen how the collaboration across countries, across the public and private sector and across all sections of the economy - from healthcare workers to car manufacturers producing masks - has allowed us to quickly develop effective vaccines that have the potential to end or at least bring under control this deadly virus. In many countries including the US we are starting to see the light at the end of the tunnel. However, the pandemic has also highlighted many inequities in our society, one of which is the inequitable distribution of vaccine doses across the world. While wealthy countries are starting to see an end to the pandemic, poor countries are in the middle of a devastating second wave resulting in thousands of daily deaths.

The World Trade Organization agreement on Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) was approved to ensure the flexibility to balance intellectual property protections and public health needs. Last fall, South Africa and India submitted a [landmark proposal](#) requesting that WTO members make use of this agreement to waive certain categories of IP rights and allow developing countries to produce their own doses on the COVID-19 vaccine until the majority of the world population receives effective immunization.

As researchers and scientists we understand the importance to be fairly compensated for the work we perform. We understand the importance of ensuring that our colleagues in the private industry also receive fair salaries. However, we believe that the need to effectively battle the health crisis caused by COVID-19, along with the billions of dollars already invested by governments into the vaccine industry, justifies making an exception to standard IP rights and the support of the TRIPS waiver.

Wealthy countries have pre-purchased more than 60% of the vaccine doses pledged by 2021 while their populations accounts for only 10% worldwide. All while low- and middle-income countries around the globe are blocked from using their manufacturing capacity to increase production of these life saving vaccines. Increasing supply rather than competing on the market is the only solution to ensure a fair distribution and safety of all of us. The TRIPS waiver proposal will allow an increase in the number of suppliers by tapping into the global production potential of both developed and developing countries. Not only is it the morally right thing to do, it will also contribute to decreasing the risk of future waves of more deadly variants spreading across the globe.

That is why our Local signed on earlier this year [this letter asking the Biden administration to support the TRIPS Waiver for COVID-19 Treatments & Vaccines](#) and that is why, in anticipation of the upcoming WTO meeting, we now again appeal to the WTO and worldwide leaders to join the 58 sponsoring governments already supporting it. Until the majority of the population worldwide is vaccinated we won't be able to put this pandemic behind us.

Reference for more info:

<https://msfaccess.org/wto-covid-19-trips-waiver-proposal-myths-realities-and-opportunity-governments-protect-access>
<https://www.msf.org/countries-obstructing-covid-19-patent-waiver-must-allow-negotiations>