

Dear Senator Durbin,

Do you know anyone who has ever been in the hospital? If so, those people's lives most likely depended on intravenous fluids and medications. Recently, many intravenous medications and additives that are vital to survival of the critically and chronically ill have not been available. These medications do not only allow people to recover and leave the hospital, they also allow patients to live healthy and productive lives.

This issue affects me personally. Every day I rely on these intravenous fluids and supplements to remain healthy and continue attending school. Over the past year, several of the intravenous nutritional supplements that I depend on were in short supply. Taking an oral supplement is not an option as I am on intravenous nutrition because I lack full absorptive capabilities, and I cannot rely on oral intake to meet my daily needs. While I face this challenge daily, I am not the only person who will be affected by these shortages. The drug shortages are not just limited to intravenous nutrition additives and components. There are an alarming number of intravenous medications that are becoming unavailable. These medications include intravenous pain medications, intravenous antibiotics, and cancer medications. This concern has the potential to affect every American or someone close to them. This is blossoming into a nationwide health concern.

These intravenous medications are becoming unavailable for a variety of reasons. There are some disruptions in the manufacturing process. When there are disruptions, often times clinicians resort to utilizing similar supplements. That then creates an increase in demand for a product, and the supply of that supplement then becomes restricted. Additionally, there are not many manufactures of these various drugs. Unfortunately, these medications do not bring in the same profit as other medications on the market. This makes each supplier even more important. We need to act in order to preserve access to life saving intravenous medications. There needs to be a way for the FDA to communicate between the producers of all the various drugs. Communication between these groups will allow for increased production of a supplement that could be used while another one is facing production challenges. Additionally, the FDA should be given adequate notice of the drug shortage, well before the drug runs out, when possible, so people can be alerted to the issue and work to develop some sort of alternate option before a crisis arises.

Currently, there are two bills that aim to address these issues. US Senate bill S. 296 and H.R. Bill 2245 are currently working to provide some solution to this issue. These bills are a great start and are vital to the health and wellbeing of all Americans. However, there is more that still needs to be done. Many times there are not alternatives to the medications. The ability to import medications would greatly benefit the American consumers. I strongly encourage you to support the quick passage of Senate bill S.296 and H.R. Bill 2245, as well as, supporting a plan for importing these vital medications. You will never know when this issue will affect you or one of your loved ones. Now is the time to act, before families across the nation face tragedy.