

# IMPORTING DRUGS FROM CANADA

## WON'T WORK, ISN'T SAFE & DOESN'T SAVE MONEY

# EVEN CANADA SAYS SO

Over the years, many policymakers have pushed drug importation as a solution for lowering prescription drug costs for patients. These proposals have ranged from allowing individuals to bring in drugs from Canada for personal use to creating wholesale (i.e. bulk) purchasing programs. **None of these schemes would result in long-term sustainable solutions to meet U.S. demand for safe, affordable life-saving medicines.** In fact, the opposite is true. Drug importation is likely to **lead to patient harm** by allowing **unapproved, substandard, falsified and counterfeit medicines** to infiltrate the closed, highly regulated U.S. drug supply chain.

## DRUG IMPORTATION IS A FALLACY

- It may be a good political move to point to Canada as a solution to high prescription drug prices in the United States, but **economists and health care experts** overwhelmingly agree that importing drugs from countries that control their prices would **do little to solve the problem of expensive drugs** in the United States.
- Even the nonpartisan Congressional Budget Office estimated that allowing Canadian drug imports would have a **"negligible" impact on drug spending.**
- The debate about importing drugs isn't about importing medications it's about **importing another country's drug price controls** - which can't be done under the U.S. health care system.



## CANADA IS AGAINST THE U.S. IMPORTING ITS DRUGS

- Canadian regulators, patient-advocacy groups and healthcare professionals have been **vocal in their disapproval of drug importation bills.** Canada does not possess the staffing or product requirements that would be expected should U.S. consumers begin to look north, quickly depleting Canada's drug supply.
- Canada's current pharmaceutical supply system, the subject of **national price negotiation and regulation,** is designed to serve the Canadian population of approximately 36 million - less people than in the entire state of California and a mere **10% of the total U.S. population.**
- When Canadian drug supplies have been threatened by drug importation bills in the U.S. in the past, regulators **proposed a ban on Canadian commercial exports of prescription drugs** and an increased scrutiny on sales to foreign individuals.





## 'CANADIAN' ONLINE PHARMACIES AREN'T CANADIAN, SAFE OR LEGAL

- Canadian law **prohibits the filling of prescriptions** issued by U.S. practitioners and Canadian regulators have consistently said that they will **not certify the integrity and safety of drugs exported from Canada** into the United States.
- U.S. consumers buying medications from 'Canadian online pharmacies' **rarely, if ever, receive the same regulator-approved products** provided to Canadian consumers.
- Counterfeit and substandard drugs are often manufactured in **unsafe conditions**; contain too much, too little, or **no active ingredients**; the incorrect active ingredient; and/or may be made using **dangerous and sometimes deadly substances**, including **fentanyl and other poisons**.
- These medicines aren't just an issue with controlled substances such as opioids. Previously seized 'drugs' have included **insulin, anti-inflammatories, fertility drugs, antibiotics, antivirals, birth control**, and other medications used for chronic conditions, health maintenance and infections.
- The sale of counterfeit drugs is lucrative generating more than **\$200 billion a year in profit for global criminal networks**. This makes counterfeit pharmaceuticals the most lucrative sector of the global illicit good trade.
- At any one time there are roughly **30,000 websites** illegally selling prescription drugs **without a prescription**, operating without a **license**, and/or peddling **counterfeit** or otherwise illegal drugs to Americans.

## THERE'S NO REAL COST SAVINGS

- Canadian drugs are **NOT necessarily cheaper** than those drugs available in the United States.
- Generic drugs make up 90% of U.S. drug sales, and generic drugs already **cost less in the U.S. than in other developed countries**.
- Any potential cost savings to U.S. consumers would likely be minimal as **additional expenses would be placed upon the wholesalers and other supply chain intermediaries** for various components like packaging, labeling and liability insurance to ensure the safety of shipped drugs.
- **Comparable or better prices can be found through the use of U.S. generics**, Federal discount programs like Medicare discount drug cards or private discount programs.
- **Past importation schemes have failed** in states like Illinois, Minnesota and Vermont. The Vermont Agency of Human Services estimated that the **substantial operating costs** for the program to meet health and regulations would **eclipse any patient savings**.

