

ASOP GLOBAL Statement on HHS Drug Importation Announcement

WASHINGTON – July 31, 2019 – In response to today’s announcement by Health and Human Services Secretary Alex Azar on the White House’s plan to allow U.S. consumers to import drugs from Canada, the [Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies](#) (ASOP Global), issued the following statement:

Today’s [announcement](#) is political, not policy – yet will have a real impact on patient safety in the U.S. and Canada.

Pathway 1 under the Safe Importation Action Plan proposes that HHS may allow States, wholesalers, or pharmacists to submit plans for demonstration projects to “import Health-Canada approved drugs.” However, Canadian regulators, patient-advocacy groups and healthcare professionals have been vocal in their disapproval of drug importation bills. In fact, just last week [fifteen Canadian organizations](#) representing patients, health professionals, hospitals, and pharmacists urged the Canadian Health Minister to prevent exactly these types of actions from U.S. regulators.

Canada’s current pharmaceutical supply system, the subject of national price negotiation and regulation, is designed to serve the Canadian population of 36 million people. In contrast, the four states that recently passed importation legislation - Florida, Vermont, Maine and Colorado combined have a population of 29 million people - more than 80% of Canada’s total population.

And let us not forget the [CanadaDrugs case](#), where a licensed Canadian wholesaler was indicted and pled guilty to making millions selling misbranded and/or counterfeit cancer medications to Americans. Pathway 1 opens the door to copy-cat criminals following this business model, getting rich while skirting safety laws and endangering Americans.

In short, we see no way the Action Plan ends up working in reality.

But when the wholesale distribution system proposed under Pathway 1 fails, American consumers will still be at risk. Americans will remember today’s headlines – that there “is a pathway” to safe importation – and will naturally go online to look for Canadian medicine. After all Americans buy nearly everything online these days, including medicines. The Action Plan is an unintentional but dangerous launching pad for [criminals](#) who make millions peddling fake and unsafe drugs to Americans online.

This is a deeply dangerous result for American consumers. Research shows that U.S. consumers buying medications from ‘Canadian online pharmacies’ rarely, if ever, receive Health-Canada approved medicines. 85% of the drugs being promoted as ‘Canadian’ came from 27 other countries around the globe, including India, Costa Rica and Vanuatu, [according to the U.S. FDA](#).

ASOP Global is not alone in our concerns. Republican and Democrat, recent and former HHS Secretaries and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioners for the past two decades have opposed importation proposals for many of these same reasons– including President Trump’s former [FDA Commissioner Scott Gottlieb](#). The U.S. [healthcare](#) and [law enforcement](#) communities also oppose importation, and past importation schemes in states like Illinois, Maine, Minnesota and Vermont have failed. Even the nonpartisan Congressional

Budget Office estimated that allowing Canadian prescription drug imports would have a "negligible" impact on drug spending.

While ASOP Global supports both Congress and the Administration's desire to increase patient access to safe, affordable medicines, importation schemes are a false promise and dangerous policy.

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ABOUT ASOP GLOBAL

The Alliance for Safe Online Pharmacies (ASOP Global), a 501(c)(4) non-profit organization headquartered in Washington, D.C. with activities in U.S., Canada, Europe, India, Latin America and Asia, is dedicated to protecting consumers around the world, ensuring safe access to medications, and combating illegal online drug sellers. ASOP Global has an expansive membership including non-profit public health organizations, international members, pharmacy members, as well as pharmaceutical manufacturers.