

INTERNATIONAL DRUG IMPORTATION

Fact Sheet January 2021

PROGRAM HISTORY & OVERVIEW

Prescription drug costs in the U.S. are prohibitively high and getting higher. The state is working on a number of efforts to address this cost burden, including the passage of [Senate Bill 19-005](#), *Import Prescription Drugs From Canada*, in 2019. The goal of the bill is to create a new marketplace that will allow Colorado consumers and payers to access lower cost imported drugs from Canada. The program is expected to be fully implemented by mid-2022. In the recently published Importation Report, the Department also analyzed the benefits of importing drugs from countries beyond Canada, and negotiating lower costs based on the prices paid by other countries.

Is Drug Importation Safe? The supply chain that will be used by the Importation Program is not much different than what is currently used in the US. The FDA has estimated [40% of finished drugs](#) on the market in the U.S. today are made in a foreign countries and about ingredients, the ingredients used to make the finished product, are produced overseas.¹ Colorado’s importation program will be using the same FDA approved manufacturers that are used in the current U.S. system today, with all samples tested to meet US standards.²

WHAT SUCCESS LOOKS LIKE: GOALS AND OUTCOME MEASURES

The primary goal of importing prescription drugs from Canada is to bring cost savings to Colorado consumers. Success is measured in the short-term by obtaining federal approval and implementing program operations by 2022. Long-term success is measured by successfully providing access to lower priced prescription drugs to most Colorado consumers.

HOW TO GET INVOLVED

Participation from health plans, Pharmacy Benefit Managers (PBMs), pharmacies and employers is key to program success. For example, if employers wish to access these savings, they should urge the health plans and PBMs they partner with to allow for coverage of imported drugs.

PARTICIPATE

Talk to your representatives and advocates about supporting policies that reduce prescription drug costs and importation for drugs that people depend on daily.

EDUCATE

The [Reducing Prescription Drug Costs in Colorado Report](#) outlines ways employers and health plans can reduce their drug costs through purchasing imported prescription drugs.

¹ United States Government Accountability Office. (2016) Report to the Committee on Energy and Commerce. Drug Safety FDA Has Improved Its Foreign Drug Inspection Program, but Needs to Assess the Effectiveness and Staffing of Its Foreign Offices. <https://www.gao.gov/assets/690/681689.pdf>

² Fisher AC, Viehmann A, Ashtiani M, et al. Quality Testing of Difficult-to-Make Prescription Pharmaceutical Products Marketed in the US. *JAMA Netw Open*. 2020;3(8):e2013920. doi:10.1001/jamanetworkopen.2020.13920 <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamanetworkopen/fullarticle/2769690>



To find more on Affordability tools including community partnerships, best practices, and more visit the Affordability website at:

<https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/hcpf/affordability>

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