[Date]

Dear [Congressional Member]:

I am writing to you as your constituent to discuss an issue of great concern—the national drug shortage. It is troubling that commonplace medications that are used in physicians’ offices every day are not available in the United States, and that their unavailability places America’s patients, including your constituents, at risk.

The issue of drug shortages in the United States is an escalating problem that began nearly a decade ago when limited production capacity and lack of competition in the pharmaceutical industry led to a shortage of generic injectable medications, including lidocaine and lidocaine with epinephrine. Since then, medical organizations, like the American Academy of Dermatology Association, have actively lobbied Congress and federal agencies, including the Federal Drug Administration, to address the concern. I fear that those efforts have not fixed the problem. Therefore, I am writing to you as a patient and your constituent to let you know how this shortage affects us.

Lidocaine is a local anesthetic frequently used for common dermatologic procedures, and lidocaine with epinephrine is essential to control bleeding during these surgical procedures. However, lidocaine with epinephrine is only available in limited quantities and in some cases has been on back order for months. The impact on this shortage is most acutely felt among solo and small practitioners where the predominant outpatient care is provided.

This is what the national shortage of lidocaine means to me and millions of other patients across the United States:

1. A patient (especially one taking a blood thinner) may not be able to have a biopsy of a suspicious skin lesion simply because the risk of bleeding is too high.

2. A patient’s skin cancer surgery may be delayed indefinitely simply because the physician cannot control the pain and bleeding inherent in the surgical procedure, which could lead to intraoperative complications.

3. A physician may have to find unconventional alternatives to anesthetizing me, thus increasing the risks associated with my procedure.

Please put an end to our nation’s drug shortage by working with the pharmaceutical industry, federal agencies and our national medical organizations to rapidly identify feasible solutions to this national crisis.

Yours most sincerely:

[Patient Name and Contact Information]