February 13, 2018

The Honorable Scott Gottlieb, M.D.
Commissioner
Food and Drug Administration
Department of Health and Human Services
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, MD 20993

Dear Dr. Gottlieb,

I write to you today regarding the shortage of IV fluids that is impacting health care facilities and patients in Wisconsin. Health care facilities have been forced to conserve IV saline solution, which has the potential to impact patient care. Given the intensity of the current flu season, it is crucial that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) use every authority at its disposal to address this crisis.

I understand there is a sustained shortage of IV fluid bags which has been significantly worsened by manufacturing disruptions caused by Hurricane Maria in Puerto Rico. Due to the shortage, some local health care professionals in Wisconsin are being forced to conserve IV fluid bags by using alternatives such as syringes to provide IV medication. These alternatives are often labor and resource intensive, which has had a significant impact on staffing and work processes at health care facilities and has created other supply shortages like sterile water vials. While I am not aware of any instances of providers delaying or diverting care to other facilities, the prolonged shortage of IV fluid bags is having an impact on hospital and health system operations across Wisconsin.

A shortage of IV fluid bags has been documented since 2014 and the impact of Hurricane Maria and the exceptionally severe flu season have combined to intensify the shortage. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health Services, there have been nearly 5,000 hospitalizations due to the flu since last September. This crisis is putting a severe strain on health care facilities in Wisconsin and throughout the country.

Given the concerns raised by health care providers in Wisconsin and across the country, I urge you to use every authority at your disposal to address this crisis. Additionally, I request that you develop a plan to address the long-term IV fluid shortage across the country. I appreciate your attention to this critical matter.

Sincerely,

Ron Kind
Member of Congress