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Dear Friends,

As you may be aware, saline shortages are plaguing our healthcare system. It has come to my attention that many of our EMS providers are facing difficulties separate and apart from hospitals due to these shortages. I have spoken with private sector representatives from Baxter, the nation's leading supplier, as well as the FDA on long-term solutions, and possible policy considerations for the future.

The FDA has documented a persistent shortage of IV fluids since January of 2014. The hurricanes of 2017 have had a detrimental impact on an already problematic supply chain. As of October 2017, no drug or medical product manufacturers in Puerto Rico were operating at higher than 70 percent capacity. This includes the Baxter plant, which is one of only three U.S. companies that manufacture IV bags. This resulted in our current problem.

In an effort to stabilize the healthcare sector's most immediate demands, the FDA has worked with the private sector to expedite the approvals necessary to bring products labeled for other market sectors into the U.S. market. The most recent FDA guidance on these products, as of January 2018, can be found on [the FDA website](#). Manufacturers are allocating IV saline products to health care providers based on historical need. This allocation has caused some concern as to whether supply will run out, or whether prices will continue to increase. This situation should change in the short term, but is dependent on uninterrupted power from the grid in Puerto Rico.

In discussing this problem with representatives from Baxter, we are optimistic that we will soon be able to put the problem behind us. As of late December 2017, their plants were all on the electrical grid in Puerto Rico. Baxter has begun importing from Canada, Ireland, Australia, and Mexico in response to the crisis. This method, however, has not increased the supply worldwide, rather, it is merely a re-allocation. Corporate representatives were hopeful that supply shortages have been mitigated due to the resumed production. In the meantime, the FDA is directing healthcare professionals to a resource on how to conserve supply in the short term. This information can be found at [Small-Volume Parenteral Solutions Shortages: Suggestions for Management and Conservation](#).

In most cases, manufacturers are allocating IV saline products to healthcare providers until supply is improved. Until there is more product in the supply chain, individual providers may find that they're not able to order excess supply, or even equal to the volumes they've purchased in the past. Although there is no indication that Texas is in danger of running out, rest assured that I am monitoring the situation.

I will continue to work on your behalf here in Washington, and back home in Texas, and welcome your comments, questions, and concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'VGM', is positioned above the printed name.

Vicente Gonzalez  
Member of Congress