



Office of the Secretary  
Washington, D.C. 20250

May 13, 2022

Robert B. Ford  
Chairman and CEO  
Abbot Laboratories  
100 Abbott Park Road  
Abbott Park, IL 60064

Dear Mr. Ford,

I am writing to express my grave concern regarding the accessibility of safe infant formula to our Nation's most vulnerable families, and request your meaningful engagement in ensuring the health, safety, and nutrition security of these populations in the short and long term.

As you know, Abbott holds infant formula contracts in the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) with states, territories, and tribes representing nearly half of the program's infants. These contracts allow Abbott to serve as the primary provider of WIC infant formula to participants in these areas, putting Abbott in a privileged position, one of critical responsibility to the national supply of infant formula.

While USDA appreciates the work you have done to replace impacted Abbott products and shift production to non-impacted facilities to attempt to mitigate supply impacts, we believe that Abbott can do more to ensure that WIC participants in states that have contracted with Abbott have access to formula.

Since the recall began, Abbott has provided rebates for alternative products, including competitive brands, so that WIC participants have continued access to safe formula. We are concerned, however, that you have extended this flexibility to states on a month-by-month basis setting up uncertainty each month for the WIC program and its participants.

In order to allow states to plan and reassure participants that they will have reliable access to formula for their babies, we ask that you extend these rebate commitments for all contracted products through at least August 31, 2022. We further request that you continue these commitments until Abbott's formula supply meets demand across the country. I believe Abbott must take these additional actions to support vulnerable WIC families during this challenging time.

Recent reports of parents who have been unable to access life-sustaining formula for their medically fragile infants are also of significant concern to me. While we recognize that you have taken recent steps to address demand for metabolic formulas on a case-by-case basis, I urge you to redouble your efforts to reach out to populations in need of specialty formulas to ensure their immediate nutrition security.

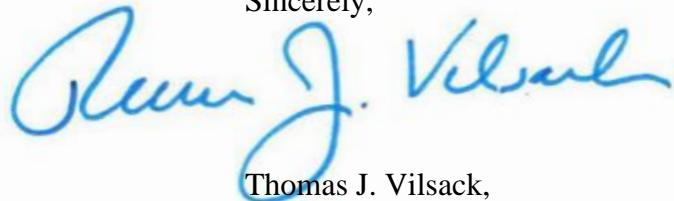
In addition, my expectation is that you will continue to work with the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and utilize all options available to you to resume production and distribution of specialty formulas. USDA stands ready to ensure that parents of medically fragile infants can access these special formulas.

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Going forward, Abbott must take every measure possible to ensure safe production of infant formula as well as a reliable supply, even in the face of disruption.

Please direct your response to Stacy Dean, Deputy Under Secretary of the Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services at Stacy.Dean@usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Thomas J. Vilsack".

Thomas J. Vilsack,  
Secretary