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Ms E.I. Schippers
Minister van Volksgezondheid, Welzijn en Sport
Postbus 20350
2500 EJ Den Haag

22 May 2017

Dear Minister Schippers,

In your capacity as the informant responsible for creating a new Dutch coalition government and in your role as the departing Minister for Health, we urge you to ensure that the new government remains committed to taking action against the skyrocketing price of new medicines in The Netherlands and Europe.

Two weeks before the election, Health Action International launched the ‘Our Medicines, Our Right’ campaign to raise awareness among the Dutch public about the unsustainability of record price increases by the pharmaceutical industry. With public expenditure on the highest-priced pharmaceuticals reaching €1.7 billion in 2014, the situation is dire and it will only worsen if no action is taken.

Our campaign was endorsed by Prof. Dr. Ernst Kuipers, Chairman of the Board of Directors at Erasmus MC, a hospital which has seen prices for expensive medicines grow by 80 percent—from €100 million to €180 million—in just seven years. He believes that health care providers, insurers and government should collaborate to ensure the continued access of patients to these expensive medicines.

To make this happen, we need a coalition government that is willing to show leadership on unsustainable price increases for new medicines.

Our campaign – endorsed by fourteen other civil society organisations – calls on politicians to adopt the following recommendations:

1. Take necessary measures to make the real price paid for medicines by governments, hospitals and other purchasers public information. Currently, buyers cannot disclose this information because of secrecy clauses in contracts with pharmaceutical companies.
2. Force pharmaceutical companies to publicly report the actual cost of researching and developing a medicine. Pharmaceutical companies keep these costs secret to justify high medicine prices.
3. Ensure that biomedical innovation that is partially or fully funded by taxpayers results in medicines that meet current health needs and are affordable and accessible. Currently, taxpayers are funding the development of medicines that are then patented by the pharmaceutical industry and sold back to them at exorbitant prices.

In just two weeks, we collected over 1900 signatures on the petition, with many leaving comments showing their clear support for strong action from their future government. You will find the petition signatures attached.

As the departing Minister for Health and the individual charged with forming a new government, we trust that you will represent their voices while forming a new national government. The sustainability of our health system depends on it.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tim Reed', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Tim Reed,
Executive Director
Health Action International

Endorsed by:

Aidsfonds
Borstkankervereniging Nederland
Diabetes Fonds
Fair Medicine
Hartstichting
Instituut voor Verantwoord Medicijngebruik
KWF Kankerbestrijding
License to Heal
Longfonds
Medecins du Monde Netherlands
Nierpatiënten Vereniging Nederland (NVN)
Nierstichting
Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM) Nederland
Wemos