

United States Senate

September 28, 2022

The Honorable Gilbert Cisneros
Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness
4000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-4000

Dear Under Secretary Cisneros,

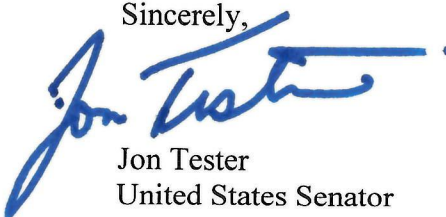
I write today to express my growing concern and frustration with the state of TRICARE benefits for our Nation's servicemembers, veterans and their families, and strongly urge the Department of Defense to take immediate steps to preserve critical access to these benefits for beneficiaries, particularly those in rural areas most impacted.

The recent decision by Express Scripts to reduce the number of in-network pharmacies beginning on October 24 - two months earlier than planned - has the potential to drive as many as 15,000 community pharmacies out of the TRICARE retail pharmacy network. As a result, approximately 400,000 beneficiaries could be forced to find a new pharmacy. No longer able to rely upon their local pharmacy to access needed medications and in-person pharmacist counseling, they would be forced to drive long distances to find corporate in-network pharmacies or be funneled into Express Scripts' mail delivery program. That is unacceptable.

Also of concern is Express Scripts' plan to reduce reimbursement rates for prescriptions dispensed at in-network retail pharmacies for calendar year 2023. Reducing reimbursement rates will make it nearly impossible for small community pharmacies to serve our Nation's 9.6 million TRICARE beneficiaries. Compounding this concern is TRICARE's confusing and often contradictory billing process that will drive even more local providers out of the program. Again, this is particularly an issue in rural areas where practices do not have the required staffing to navigate the program's bureaucracy and time-consuming red tape.

Moving forward, I need to know the immediate steps the Department will take to address these urgent concerns. Our TRICARE beneficiaries deserve convenient access to the quality and timely benefits and care they have earned, and I will continue to strongly oppose any efforts to restrict that access. I look forward to your response and stand willing to assist your efforts in any way I can.

Sincerely,



Jon Tester
United States Senator