

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

October 12, 2022

The Honorable Seileen Mullen
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
Defense Health Agency
7700 Arlington Boulevard
Suite 5101
Falls Church, VA 22042-5101

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Mullen,

Last year, Express Scripts secured a multi-year, \$4.3 billion contract to assist the Defense Health Agency (DHA) and manage its pharmacy benefit-related activities across all states and territories. I write today to elevate the concerns of my constituents, who are struggling to access critical medications as a result of recently announced changes from Express Scripts to the TRICARE Pharmacy Benefit program.

Effective October 24, Express Scripts has announced a significant reduction in reimbursement rates and coverage of prescriptions for many of its TRICARE network pharmacies. In Wisconsin, dozens of pharmacies will no longer be in Express Script's TRICARE network. Active service military members, veterans, and their families will travel to further, less convenient locations, to access their necessary medications, or select a mail-pharmacy option. TRICARE families across the country and in Wisconsin are being forced to find a new pharmacy within a limited network, all while we prepare for cold and flu season and continue to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.

I am extremely concerned that these reductions and restrictions will jeopardize access to timely and safe medications for my constituents. I understand that this change was in part due to Express Script's determination that the previous TRICARE pharmacy contract included "more pharmacies than needed to meet government access standards" however, this decision impacts hundreds of thousands of veterans and their families. In Wisconsin, I have heard reports of pharmacists being unsure of the status of their participation in the program, conflicting information on the Tricare website, and veterans who were not notified by Express Scripts about this change.

In order to ensure that my constituents are able to continue to access their medications, I request answers to the following questions:

1. How is DHA working to ensure that every beneficiary is being made aware of this change? How is DHA notifying pharmacies regarding their participation in the program and working to ensure the accuracy of the information on TRICARE's website?

2. Reports indicate that Express Scripts is suggesting that beneficiaries may switch from receiving in-person pharmacy services to mail services. I have also heard from Veterans that switching to Express Scripts by mail costs substantially more than getting their prescriptions from their local pharmacy. How is DHA working with beneficiaries who may not be able to receive pharmacy services through the mail? How will DHA address this cost increase to beneficiaries?
3. What steps will DHA take to ensure adequate access to in-person pharmacy services for TRICARE beneficiaries if future in-network pharmacy participation decreases?

I appreciate your attention to this important issue and look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator