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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3221

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May 11, 2020

The Honorable Thomas McCaffery
Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
Defense Health Agency
Department of Defense
7700 Arlington Boulevard, Suite 5101
Falls Church, VA 22402

Dear Mr. McCaffery,

As our nation responds to the COVID-19 outbreak, We write to urge you to ensure that our TRICARE beneficiaries can continue to safely access affordable medications in a timely manner.

It is our understanding that in order to protect patient and employee health and safety, military treatment facilities (MTF) may close or limit access for TRICARE beneficiaries seeking pharmacy services. Additionally, beneficiaries who can still access an MTF pharmacy may prefer not to do so in person in order to adhere to social distancing guidelines. These efforts to ensure safety are important, but it is important that these patients continue to be able to access their medications in a timely manner through the TRICARE retail pharmacy network.

There are more than 56,000 retail pharmacies in the TRICARE network, and nearly all Americans live within 5 miles of a community pharmacy. These pharmacies have taken important steps to ensure safe, timely access to medications. Even prior to the pandemic, community pharmacies delivered medications in person, through home delivery or courier, or even by secure drone. Drive-through windows at many pharmacy locations also increase accessibility for patients. They also fill 90-day supplies of medications to reduce the number of trips to the pharmacy. Since the outbreak, pharmacies are further facilitating safe access to medications through steps such as expanding delivery options and offering same day delivery and free next day delivery. This provides much faster access than mail order delivery. Also, pharmacies have initiated measures such as advanced payment for curbside and drive-through pick up to minimize contact, and are taking necessary, recommended action to remain safe for patients who choose to access medications in person through upholding infection control guidance as recommended by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Community pharmacy employees were designated critical infrastructure workers by the Department of Homeland Security Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency and have taken this responsibility seriously to provide continued access for patients. Therefore, it is important that the Defense Health

Agency also recognize the important role that community pharmacies play in the TRICARE pharmacy benefit. As you work through this changing environment and take steps to change, improve or modify beneficiary access to the pharmacy benefit, it is important that equal consideration be given to the retail pharmacy network in order to maintain access and choice for all beneficiaries.

We look forward to working with you to protect access to medications for TRICARE beneficiaries.

Sincerely,



Elise M. Stefanik
Member of Congress

The following Members of Congress have cosigned the letter:

Sanford D. Bishop Jr.
Mike D. Rogers
Michael F.Q. San Nicolas
Austin Scott