



Maine **PHARMACY ASSOCIATION**

PO Box 174 Turner Maine 04282

Honorable Susan M. Collins
413 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, DC 20510
Phone: (202) 224-2523
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Dear Senator Collins,

On behalf of the Maine Pharmacy Association and our members throughout the state, I am writing to urge you to prevent the Pentagon from pushing TRICARE patients into mail order for prescription drugs. TRICARE should save money by promoting cost effective generic drugs – not by making our military members pay more to visit a local pharmacy. TRICARE already promotes mail order. The copayment amounts are the same for retail pharmacy and mail order. But TRICARE allows beneficiaries to obtain three times more medication from mail order as from retail. That is a clear incentive to use mail order.

Despite efforts to promote mail order, beneficiaries strongly prefer local retail pharmacies. Last year, forty percent of TRICARE prescriptions were filled at retail pharmacies, compared with only seventeen percent by mail order. And now, the Pentagon wants to go even further to push beneficiaries into mail order. The DOD has made it clear that starting in October, it will encourage mail order by increasing copayments for retail pharmacy. Unless Congress acts to stop it, the Pentagon will increase what beneficiaries pay to visit their local pharmacy. The Senate should not allow this to happen. TRICARE beneficiaries deserve a fair choice of where to receive medications. We believe cost sharing should be equal, regardless of where the beneficiary chooses to obtain their medication. I understand the need for savings. Pharmacies have worked for years to save money in TRICARE and other health programs. But the Pentagon should not try to save money by forcing people into mail order. A better way to save money is to increase utilization of generic medications across the board. Generic drugs are equally effective but provide huge savings compared to brand name drugs.

I support a plan that would produce significant savings by letting TRICARE beneficiaries get generic drugs for a zero copayment – both through mail order and from retail pharmacies. The Pentagon wants to have a zero copayment for generic drugs just for mail order, not for retail. That's not fair to beneficiaries or to local pharmacies. This plan is simple and has been

endorsed by both the chain and independent drug store associations. It creates a co-payment structure of \$0 for generics, \$15 for preferred brands, and \$30 for non-preferred brands. This offers greater incentives for beneficiaries to use generic medications. It will also still allow beneficiaries to obtain a 90 day supply at mail versus a 30 day supply at retail.

The Senate is drafting the defense authorization bill now and will be voting on it soon. I hope you will work to support our proposal as part of that bill. The pharmacies and TRICARE beneficiaries in your state will greatly appreciate your efforts and your support. I look forward to your response to share with our members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'C. Gauthier', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Christopher R. Gauthier, RPh
Executive Director
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