

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 3, 2019

David J. McIntyre, Jr.
President and Chief Executive Officer
TriWest Healthcare Alliance
PO Box 42049
Phoenix, AZ 85080-2049

Dear Mr. McIntyre:

We write to express our concerns about TriWest's implementation of the new urgent care benefit under the VA MISSION Act.

We represent Western states with many rural communities where many veterans in Oregon and Idaho live hours away from the nearest VA medical center (VAMC). Consequently, we have pushed for more VA facilities and treatment options in our states and have worked to improve access to care in the community when VA care is not available or far away.

Among other things, the VA MISSION Act sought to improve access and options for veterans to include urgent care in the community. As part of the law's implementation, VA recently awarded the contract for Community Care Network Region 4, which includes our states, to TriWest Healthcare Alliance.

Unfortunately, we have heard from veterans who are unable to use this new urgent care benefit due to the lack of an urgent care network in their area. Veterans in Roseburg, Oregon, have no in-network urgent care clinics within 20 miles, and veterans in John Day, Oregon—a community classified as “frontier” by the Oregon Office of Rural Health—would have to travel 74 miles to access urgent care. Pocatello, Idaho, with a population of approximately 55,000, has no in-network urgent care clinics within 20 miles, and Lewiston, Idaho, which has a population of approximately 33,000, has no in-network clinics within 50 miles.

Veterans also tell us that TriWest's locator tool (<https://vaurgentcarelocator.triwest.com>) exacerbates these distance problems by basing locations on direct geographical distance rather than actual driving distance. As a result, some of our veterans are finding that clinics are even further away than they appear in the tool.

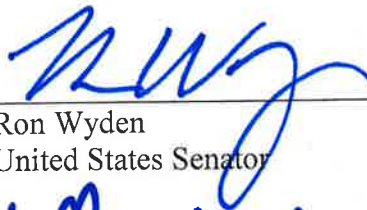
Given this information, we respectfully request answers to the following questions:

- What are the barriers preventing TriWest from building out its urgent care network by the original deadline of July 15, 2019, previously cited on TriWest's website?
- What metrics is TriWest using to determine when the urgent care network is “complete”?
- By when is the urgent care network expected to be “complete”?

We also urge TriWest to work closely with the VAMCs in Oregon, Idaho, and Washington to build out its urgent care network as soon as possible and ensure that veterans receive clear information about their options.

Thank you for your immediate attention to this serious issue affecting our veterans. We know you share our commitment to them, and we stand ready to assist.

Sincerely,



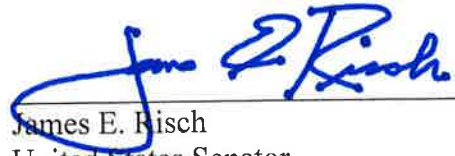
Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Mike Crapo
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



James E. Fisch
United States Senator