

VERONICA ESCOBAR
16TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS
SUBCOMMITTEE ON MILITARY CONSTRUCTION,
VETERANS AFFAIRS, AND RELATED AGENCIES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY

HOUSE BUDGET COMMITTEE



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

WASHINGTON D.C. OFFICE:
2448 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-4831

EL PASO OFFICE:
221 N. KANSAS STREET, SUITE 1500
EL PASO, TX 79901
(915) 541-1400

<http://escobar.house.gov>

NEW DEMOCRAT COALITION
CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS
CONGRESSIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS
DEMOCRATIC WOMEN'S CAUCUS

Dr. Stephen Ferrara
Acting Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs
Defense Health Agency
7700 Arlington Boulevard
Falls Church, VA 224042

Lieutenant General Telita Crosland
Director
Defense Health Agency
7700 Arlington Boulevard
Falls Church, VA 22042

February 28, 2025

Dear Acting Assistant Secretary Ferrara and Lt. Gen. Crosland,

I write to express my deep concern about the ability of many of my constituents to access their preferred healthcare in the community of El Paso, which I am so honored to represent in Congress.

El Paso is the proud home to Fort Bliss and the stellar service members and military families which are the bedrock of our community. The military population in my district and the surrounding region rely on William Beaumont Army Medical Center and its network of clinics to access a wide array of their health services on a plan and at a location that best suits their needs.

However, the impending closure of one of these health clinics – the Desert Sage Medical Home, which many of my constituents have relied on for their health treatments – was first noticed to the patient community in late January 2025, well over 30 days after the conclusion of the annual TRICARE Open Season 2024 period. I understand the Desert Sage Medical Home is set to close its doors by April 1, 2025. I have engaged with the leadership of the William Beaumont Army Medical Center to receive a brief on the reasons for this decision, to include considerations related to the size of our health provider population, the patient population, operating costs, and the goal of optimizing the health clinics in our region to provide the widest array of health services for our military personnel and their dependents.

Many of my constituents are, due to their location of residence, concerned about the impact the closure of the Desert Sage Medical Home will have on their ability to reliably access their health

services at a nearby location. As such, I respectfully request consideration be granted to treating the Desert Sage Medical Home closure as a qualifying life event, such that it may provide the Desert Sage Medical Home patient population an extension period to change their TRICARE West coverage from a Prime to a Select plan, should they elect to do so. As you know, TRICARE Select plans empower patients to access increased care options from outside providers, which may improve patient satisfaction when distance from a Medical Treatment Facility (MTF) or primary care clinic is a barrier to care. Should this proposal not be accepted, I request consideration be granted to extend the service life of the Desert Sage Medical Home by at least two months.

I appreciate the work of the Defense Health Agency to provide coverage and critical health services to our service members and military dependents. I remain concerned that the Desert Sage Medical Home's closure may negatively impact the ability of El Pasoans to comfortably and reliably access health care, and I believe this proposal may alleviate those pressures for many of my constituents and ensure that the Defense Health Agency's commitment is being upheld to the fullest extent.

I look forward to your response and opportunities for further engagements to resolve this matter for my constituents.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Veronica Escobar". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Cc Colonel Lee C. Freeman
Commander
William Beaumont Army Medical Center
18511 Highlander Medics St.
Fort Bliss, TX 79918