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October 23, 2018

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

Dear Mr. McIntyre:

Thank you for your October 3, 2018, letter informing my office on recent developments regarding access to community care for veterans residing in my home state of North Dakota. I am writing to bring to your attention a collaborative effort taking place within the Fargo VA Health Care System, and urge you to ensure that the success of this effort is maintained as TriWest expands its role in the Veterans Choice Program to all regions, including North Dakota.

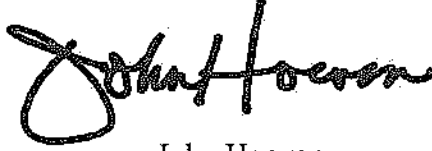
As you are likely aware, Health Net Federal Services was previously contracted by the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to administer the Patient-Centered Community Care (PC3) and Veterans Choice Programs for Veterans Integrated Service Network (VISN) 23, which includes nearly all of North Dakota. During this time, both veterans and health care providers in my state contacted my office to share the challenges they encountered when working with this third party contractor. North Dakota veterans were concerned with the long waiting times they faced when trying to schedule their community care appointments. At the same time, health care providers in my state who served veterans through the Veterans Choice Program reported that they were not being paid in a prompt manner. While the establishment of the Veterans Choice Program was an important step in ensuring veterans' access to quality and timely health care, it was clear that significant improvements needed to be made in order to honor our commitment to care for our heroes.

In response to these concerns, I pushed the VA to implement the Choice Program Care Coordination initiative at the Fargo VA Medical Center. This program allows Fargo VA staff to work directly with veterans and help them schedule and coordinate their community care appointments in an expedited manner. According to patient access data released by the Veterans Health Administration (VHA) in September 2018, the Fargo VA Health Care System, when compared to the national VA, has lower average waiting times for primary, specialty, and mental health care appointments. Recognizing its success in reducing wait times, the VA has extended this initiative to other VA facilities around the nation.

Due to the success of the Choice Program Care Coordination initiative in reducing waiting times for appointments, I urge you to ensure that this program continues. Additionally, I would encourage TriWest to work with the VA to encourage it to utilize this successful initiative in other areas of the country where veterans are still struggling to receive timely community care appointments.

I look forward to working with you and helping to ensure that veterans in North Dakota and around the nation receive the care that they have earned and deserve. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Hoeven". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial "J".

John Hoeven
U.S. Senator