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Congress of the United States
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

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SUBCOMMITTEE ON CONSTITUTION
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**HOUSE COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT
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RANKING MEMBER-SUBCOMMITTEE ON
ECONOMIC GROWTH, ENERGY POLICY,
AND REGULATORY AFFAIRS

SUBCOMMITTEE ON NATIONAL SECURITY

March 28, 2024

Tim Wentworth
Chief Executive Officer
Walgreens Boots Alliance
108 Wilmot Rd.
Deerfield, IL 60015

Dear Mr. Wentworth:

I'm writing out of concern for the impending closure of a Walgreens storefront on April 9, 2024, located at 1400 N Grand Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63106. This abrupt closure will have devastating ripple effects across Missouri's First Congressional District's most vulnerable residents, particularly Medicare and Medicaid recipients. It will significantly reduce pharmacy access to patients most in need and worsen already existing pharmacy deserts in St. Louis. For these reasons, I ask that Walgreens reverse its decision to close this location.

As you know, a pharmacy desert is a geographic area that is not serviced by any pharmacies within a radius of one mile, or a half mile in areas where residents have limited access to transportation options.¹ In 2022, researchers found that nearly 15 percent of residents in the City of St. Louis lived more than a mile away from a pharmacy—nearly 45,000 of my constituents.² Black residents in St. Louis face even greater disparities, with 53% of Black residents living more than a mile from pharmacies.³ As healthcare industry leaders, it is imperative that Walgreens remains committed to implementing health equity initiatives that work to close this gap, not widen it.

As a result of the large market share Walgreens and other big-box pharmacies have, local, community-based pharmacies have often been forced to close or drastically reduce their services rendered. A closure of a large pharmacy would only make matters worse. The most medically vulnerable patients in our communities include people with disabilities, seniors, and low-income residents. With this most recent closure, countless patients will lose access to their neighborhood pharmacy, which means potential gaps in procuring lifesaving prescriptions and over-the-counter medications.

¹ Rachel Wittenauer, Parth D Shah, Jennifer L Bacci, Andy Stergachis, "Pharmacy deserts and COVID-19 risk at the census tract level in the State of Washington," (Oct. 17, 2022).

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S2590136222000870>

² Nathan Busch and Jonathan Mishory, "Pharmacy Deserts in St. Louis." (Dec. 5, 2022).

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/3979028ac5ba4ff5b0ec7ff647e20dde>

³ Ibid.

With previous Walgreens closures in 2023 at 3631 Gravois Ave, and 5550 South Grand Blvd, I saw the devastating effects of pharmacy closures firsthand and how it negatively impacted my constituents. This will particularly impact people with mobility or transportation barriers, or those who do not have reliable internet access or fluency to order online. Our most marginalized community members—our unhoused neighbors—are unable to take advantage of temporary stop-gaps proposed by Walgreens, such as 1-2 day prescription delivery because they do not have a fixed address. We need permanent solutions, rather than temporary.

Given the time sensitive nature of this request, please respond to the following questions no later than Friday, April 5, 2024:

1. Will Walgreens reverse the decision to close its store located at 1400 N Grand Blvd, St. Louis, MO 63106?
2. How many Medicare and Medicaid recipients has this location serviced in the last 90 days?
3. What are the metrics used to determine which Walgreens pharmacies remain open in an urban area?
4. How, if at all, does Walgreens solicit community, local, state, and federal stakeholders' feedback about the impact of potential pharmacy closures prior to plans being announced?
5. Within the next 12 calendar months, does Walgreens plan to close any more storefront locations in either the St. Louis region or the state of Missouri?
6. How does Walgreens plan to reduce the number of residents living in pharmacy deserts in St. Louis and ameliorate the impact of this closure on the most vulnerable residents in the long-term?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to working with your team to find swift and equitable solutions to this problem.

Sincerely,



Cori Bush
Member of Congress