

September 30, 2009

The Honorable Robert M. Gates
Secretary of Defense
1000 Defense Pentagon
Washington, DC 20301-1000

Dear Mr. Secretary:

I am writing on behalf of the 375,000 members of the Military Officers Association of America to urge you to reverse the TRICARE inpatient copay increases announced today in the attached TRICARE Management Activity press release – including a \$110 per day increase for retirees and their family members and survivors covered by TRICARE Standard.

This shocking announcement is extremely disappointing, given your public assurances earlier this year that the Defense Department would not be proposing any TRICARE fee increases for FY2010. Because of your previous assurances, we believe these increases were undertaken without your knowledge or approval.

As you know, Congress explicitly barred any TRICARE fee increases – including any increase in the retiree inpatient copay – in each of the last three Defense Authorization Acts. We believe that the only reason the Armed Services Committees didn't include a similar prohibition in their mark-ups of the FY2010 Defense Authorization Act was that they took Administration assurances on this subject at face value.

They believe, as we do, that the current \$535 per day retiree inpatient copay is already far larger than inpatient copays under most civilian insurance plans. We don't understand how a further 21% increase to \$645 meets any standard of equity or reasonableness for the most seriously ill and injured beneficiaries to whom it would apply.

I urge you most strongly to repudiate and overturn this inappropriate and unfair increase.

Sincerely,

