



August 25, 2020

Louis DeJoy
 Postmaster General
 United States Postal Service
 475 L'Enfant Plaza S.W.
 Washington, DC 20260

Dear Postmaster DeJoy:

On behalf of the 20 organizations and 133 million Americans living with a chronic condition we represent, we are writing to express concern about the altered operations and package delays within the U.S. Postal Service (USPS). These changes pose a severe risk to the health and safety of the tens of millions Americans who rely on USPS to receive their needed, life-sustaining prescription medications in a timely manner. Our constituents represent many of the COVID-19 high-risk patient groups who are, for example, immunocompromised, have a co-morbid condition, are 65 years or older and/or a member of a racial or ethnic minority group.

As you know, USPS plays a critical role in the distribution of prescription medications. Prior to the public health emergency brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, USPS shipped 1.2 billion prescriptions in 2019 alone. In 2018, 1 in 6 Medicare Part D enrollees and 1 in 8 large employer plan enrollees had a prescription delivered by mail. Further, every year the Department of Veterans Affairs fills about 80 percent of prescriptions through the mail. Now that the coronavirus has forced Americans to socially distance or self-isolate, mail-in prescriptions are becoming even more popular. Just this March, mailed prescriptions increased by 21 percent from the previous year. Given the extent of dependence on mailed prescriptions, our primary concerns about delays are:

- Adhering to social distancing policies is a matter of life and death for Americans with a chronic disease.** This often means relying more heavily on the mail for essential prescriptions in order to avoid going into pharmacies. As a group, Americans with a chronic disease, like cancer, chronic kidney disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, obesity, and diabetes, are at much higher risk of experiencing the most severe symptoms of COVID-19. In fact, data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) show that those with diabetes, chronic lung disease, or other underlying health conditions were hospitalized six times more often and were 12 times more likely to die of COVID-19. Almost 50 percent of



Americans with doctor-diagnosed arthritis are 65 years old, which is a high-risk group for contracting COVID-19. We are concerned that the implemented changes force Americans to choose between following public health guidance to stay safe and receiving the medications they desperately need to manage their care.

- **Many biologic drugs require certain environments to remain safe and effective.** The impact of mail delays is compounded by the fact that many of the medications that Americans with a chronic disease rely on, such as insulin, are highly sensitive to temperature. Many such medications require refrigeration within 28 days, and some become unusable or ineffective in just 14 days without refrigeration. Because more than 10 million Americans regularly take such medications, this puts far too many Americans at great risk. Not only does this disrupt the continuity of their supply of medications, it also potentially leaves them with an ineffective and unsafe drug once they have received it. During a public health emergency that disproportionately impacts Americans with a chronic disease, we are especially concerned about the impact of mail delays on disease management.

While we appreciate that you have committed to halt the changes implemented earlier this summer, we believe more should be done to curb any damage to Americans, including those with a medical condition. In order to ensure the safe and timely delivery of critical medications, we urge you to restore altered package operations and reinstate delivery standards to ensure timely delivery of packages. By going further than suspending the changes and returning to the status quo, we can ensure that all Americans get the access to the health supplies they need.

Thank you for your consideration of our concerns and recommendations. It is our hope that we can serve as a resource during these difficult times. Please feel free to reach out to Chris Fox (cfox@diabetes.org) or Anna Hyde (ahyde@arthritis.org) with any questions. We look forward to working with you.

Respectfully,

American Autoimmune Related Diseases Association (AARDA)
 American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network
 American Diabetes Association
 American Kidney Fund
 American Lung Association



- Arthritis Foundation
- Association of Diabetes Care & Education Specialists
- Cystic Fibrosis Foundation
- Hemophilia Federation of America
- Immune Deficiency Foundation
- JDRF
- Mended Hearts & Mended Little Heart
- National Alliance on Mental Illness
- National Kidney Foundation
- National Multiple Sclerosis Society
- Pulmonary Hypertension Association
- Rheumatology Nurses Society
- Susan G. Komen
- The AIDS Institute
- WomenHeart: The National Coalition for Women with Heart Disease