



First Ladies Health Initiative

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For more information contact:

Denise M. Spencer 312.470.0270 x2006

Tracey Alston 773-405-1250

**The First Ladies Health Initiative Sends Letter to Express Scripts
Outlining the Value of Walgreens to the African American Community**
Group Responds to Express Scripts Decision to Exclude Walgreens from Network

Chicago, IL – The First Ladies Health Initiative, representing more than 100 First Ladies (pastors’ wives) of African American churches around the cities of Chicago and Los Angeles, today sent an open letter to Express Scripts, Inc., a pharmacy benefit manager (PBM), on the value of Walgreens in the community. The letter is in response to Express Scripts’ decision to discontinue in-network coverage of patient prescriptions filled at neighborhood Walgreens, as of January 1.

“As Chairperson of the Walgreens First Ladies Health Day Initiative, I have worked side-by-side with Walgreens pharmacists and community representatives and I marvel at their tireless commitment to making a difference for folks who otherwise can’t make a difference for themselves,” said Jamell Meeks, First Lady of Salem Baptist Church and Chairperson of the Chicago First Ladies Health Initiative. “I know the communities rely heavily on Walgreen’s pharmacy services and to deprive the community of this critically-needed service would be a travesty.”

In an open letter to Express Scripts, the group discussed the value of Walgreens in the African American community.

“With more stores than any pharmacy open 24 hours a day, the Walgreens pharmacist often takes the burden of unnecessary ER visits from local hospitals and trauma centers and is proactive in alerting customers to possible conflicts in prescribed medication,” the letter states. “No other retail store has helped to stabilize communities, provide quality jobs to community residents and attract other retailers and companies into communities like Walgreens. In addition to its quality health products and pharmaceutical services, Walgreens also services the community by supporting existing programs and creating new ones to meet urgent health needs.”

“I’m especially concerned about our senior population,” said Evelyn Perkins, First Lady of True Friendship Missionary Baptist Church and Chairperson of the Los Angeles First Ladies Health Initiative. “The significance of having a Walgreens pharmacist to help sort out increasingly confusing medications cannot be overstated. With the aging of our community, this personal touch in the neighborhood is imperative to helping our people live longer lives. This is why I was thrilled that the Initiative chose to add Los Angeles to its network of First Ladies this year.”

About the First Ladies Health Initiative

For more than two decades, one of the most urgent health needs in the community was, and still is, the devastating spread of HIV/AIDS among minorities. With the help of African American public relations agency, Danielle Ashley Group, Walgreens initiated an HIV/AIDS Task Force which culminated in the formation of the Walgreens First Ladies Health Day. The pilot program began in June, 2008 in Chicago, with over 150 First Ladies collectively representing more than 150,000 persons from the State of Illinois. Many represented “mega-churches” with memberships of 10,000 or more. The result of that luncheon meeting was the launch of an historic, city-wide health day to provide information and screenings for diabetes, hypertension, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, mental illness, Alzheimer’s and other diseases, to thousands of Chicagoland residents. In 2011, the First Ladies Health Initiative was launched in Los Angeles, California and will continue to expand its programs to reach other major urban centers.

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