Blair Dean Hurst

August 10, 2001

Dear Ms. Topper,

I am writing this letter in response to the news of upcoming hearings about the use of opiods for the treatment of chronic pain - Docket # 01N-0256.

I have had severe chronic pain for 20 years due to problems with my spine. I have had 2 surgeries and was an in-patient at a multi-disciplinary pain clinic. (multi-discipline did not include pain medication involving opioids in 1985) I have been to over 20 doctors; I have had physical therapy →

I was able to slowly regain the strength and endurance I had lost over the years. As I felt better, I was able to join volunteer organizations - first in a small way but as I progressed, so did my ability to participate. Now out and about instead of home on the couch, I began to make new friends to replace the ones I'd lost over the years.

I did not - and do not - rely solely on my medications to see me through each day. I use all the skills and abilities I learned at the pain clinic and through personal research.

Two months ago I began a part-time job - the first job I'd had in 15 years.

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for a total of 24 months. While I made minor gains from all these treatments — surgery, pain clinic, PT, self-help groups — I was still in severe pain. I was unable to work, I was unable to have a social life; I was unable to care for my home and family. The only relief from the pain was to lie down but lying down weakened me — causing a vicious cycle.

Five years ago, I began to take a time-release opiod medication (MS Contin). It changed my life. With my pain reduced to the level of a "4" on the pain scale of 1-10,

Although I was not able to to work full time and did not take a job at a managerial level like I had done in the past, this job is a victory.

Working caused my pain level to rise. I am determined to make it work. My employer bought me a great chair, I returned to PT to learn how to get even stronger and I increased my time-released morphine. I am confident that I will over come the obstacles in my way.

I never could have even considered returning to work and a fulfilling social life without the medication. MS-Contin saved my life in important ways. I want others to have the chance to reclaim their lives with the help of opioid therapy.

Blaerthurst