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BOARD CERTIFIED IN
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CERTIFIED IN ADDICTION MEDICINE
MEDICAL REVIEW OFFICER
CHRONIC PAIN SPECIALIST

August 14, 2001

Kimberly Topper
Food and Drug Administration, CDER
Advisors and Consultants Staff, HFD-21
5600 Fishers Lane
Rockville, MD 20857

Re: Anesthetic and Life Support Drugs Advisory Committee Meeting, Sept. 13-14, 2001

Dear Ms. Topper:

I am a physician practicing in Northern Virginia who specializes in pain management and addiction medicine, most of the time two separate patient populations. I am board-certified in internal medicine and gastroenterology. I am also certified in addiction medicine by the American Society of Addiction Medicine (ASAM), and I am a certified medical review officer. I am a fellow of the American College of Physicians and ASAM, and I am also a member of the American Academy of Pain Medicine and the American Pain Society. Moreover, I am a section coordinator and an editor of "Pain Management and Addiction Medicine" for ASAM's *Principles of Addiction Medicine, Second Edition*, June 1998. I am also co-chair of ASAM's Pain Committee.

I am writing regarding the concerns about the diversion of opioid pain medications and to assure you that we in the medical profession share these concerns. It is my belief that the government, the medical profession, the pharmaceutical companies, pharmacists, and patients all share responsibility for making sure opioids are available to those who need them for the relief of pain and unavailable to those who don't. I believe it is the responsibility of government to establish a system of controls to prevent abuse, trafficking, and diversion of opioids, while at the same time ensuring their availability for medical and scientific purposes. I also believe it is the responsibility of the physician to properly evaluate the patients who present to his or her office to determine if the patient is a candidate for opioid therapy.

I hope when you are considering what remedies to take to combat this problem that you will not penalize the overwhelming majority of physicians who prescribe opioids appropriately to relieve chronic pain and the patients who need these drugs to relieve chronic debilitating pain.

Sincerely,



Howard A. Heit, M.D., F.A.C.P., F.A.S.A.M.

HAH/jh