

Senate Health and Welfare Committee
February 3, 2016

Chronic pain bill reform

Thank you Chair and Senators,

Have you ever been in Pain? Stubbed your toe or gotten a paper cut. They might be small but have a bite to them- that pain is irritating, annoying, gets in the way of putting on winter boots and or getting lemon in that cut while cooking your family a meal and can send you into a quick screaming rage. But you know you will get over it, so a few days ,or max a week, its past your life and you don't even remember it. The brain is great at helping us forget pain and no one wants to stay in that moment of discomfort, so we forget and heal.

On the other end, have you ever given birth or broken a leg or even slipped on the ice while walking to your car to get to work and been over come by such a deep, gut wrenching, pain that stayed with you for hours upon hours and days to such a nagging extent you wanted to escape your body. Float away, scream and yell, cuss and swear, and after you had your tantrums, the pain was still present. It was consuming and you could not think past the possibility that it would leave. Your leg or back that was hurt from doing something so mind numbingly innocent as walk to the car, now has the power to insert its discomfort and pain upon how the rest of your body feels, functions and dictates how you will bathe, sleep, feed your self, buy groceries, show up to work and earn an income, take care of your children. Not even will this pain allow you to take a few hours to nap and rest so that you could possibly cope with the stress that it has brought on your body and mind. You do know that it will heal and in a few days, weeks or months you will heal.

Chronic pain is all of this- for ever and every day, flexing its weight on odd hours of our days and nights. We hope for good days and do our best health practices to achieve them, and still – we might only get a few hours of a level 4/10 pain for part of the day and think that is a relief. It is exhausting, it controls how we will move and live in the world. How we interact with others and how we will choose to engage in work and social activities. We do mandatory things first. Bathroom, eat and if we are so fortunate we do our best to work and make an income. Now imagine if you are me. Imagine having a chronic pain condition and then getting cancer?? How would you cope with that, what would you need to help you be mobile enough for the basics and at best feel good enough to drive 45 minutes to sit for an hour and then head home and hope that it was worth it, because your day would be spent on a couch or bed with heating pads.

At 17 I was in a passenger in major car accident on I-95. I became temporarily paralyzed and broke my neck. I was "fixed" with a massive cervical spine

reconstruction from the base of my skull. They took out bone from my hips to re-purpose and fuse in my neck and wire it together. It took 6 months in a cervical neck brace and a walker to heal. 5 months into the recovery, I was again a passenger in a car and we were rear ended by a plow truck. We were at a dead stop and he rammed into the little 2 door Nissan at 45 MPH. My misfortune, was to have my lower back, L-5 to S-1, herniate. It was weaker from the hip surgeries and my neck had my collar on and saved my life.

I was 29 when I was diagnosed with advanced cervical cancer. Within in 4 days I had a radical hysterectomy with many abdominal complications that have led to an extended 6 abdominal and internal surgeries and reconstructions. At one point having an open wound from hip to hip bone up past my navel. You could see my insides and I wanted to be dead or in a coma. I did not want to be awake for any of it. Second, I had to start Chemo and radiation for 3 months and today I can say I am cancer free, but at what cost?

I am plagued with a level of pain so high that I spend early nights rocking on the floor crying or lowly screaming to release my anguish. Manage working on days when you can only scream as you are stuck in that " I just stubbed my toe, high level of discomfort, all the time" it is almost not possible.

I can only manage to function because of the use of pain medication. I have been using medications since I was 17- and broke my neck, and then my back. The radiation has helped my spine to degrade and my pelvic pain, hips and legs ache on such a core, deep, level that the only relief I can get is from medication- constant and regular medication.

I already feel subjected to many levels of hardship to get the medication I need. Always having to do pill counts, pick up my scripts by person and not have them called in, talking to my doctor relentlessly about my use and if I feel I have a problem or addiction. I have chronic pain specialists who monitor me, I have a primary care doctor, I have spinal doctors, I have oncologists, I have mental health doctors. I am doing everything I can to be transparent about my use, just so that I can be given a treatment of medicine that helps me function and participate in life as best I can. It is a punishment, a public shaming, and to ask me to do more would cost me so much time, and energy and waste so much money on nurse, doctor and insurance fees. I am not a drug addict. I have chronic pain and need care and respect as a patient. Please remember my story when working on these bills that have the ability to truly impact mine and others quality of life.

Thank you,

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