House Committee Hearing
February 11 2020

HB 316

Greetings Health Committee, Delegates,

I've spoken with a few of you, it's nice to see familiar faces! I am pleased to meet the rest of the Health Committee Delegates today, and thank all of you for letting me share with you today.

I could spend 10 minutes just describing my most painful diagnoses, but will spare you 17 years of details and skip to what the current state laws combined with the nationwide environment of fear surrounding prescribing have COST me. During those 17 years I was always a compliant patient and even VOLUNTARILY reduced my dose when able. In 2017 I suffered a Traumatic Brain Injury, but have spent every moment since fighting my way back from PTSD and crippling anxiety that have become an unwelcome member of my life. My fight for quality of life after my TBI took another hit when my pain doctor closed his practice 2 days before my next appointment; I became an abandoned pain patient, but was one of the lucky ones who was able to find a new pain doctor quickly. At the first appointment, without any discussion or history, he informed me he was reducing my dose by half; the following appointment he told me I would be completely tapered off of my pain medicines. Over the next couple of months, I was called a drug seeker, doctor shopper, and worse as I struggled to find another health care provider. I was in constant withdrawal and quickly losing my quality of life, yet no one seemed to care but me!

I now strategically plan out the cost of every activity, every day. Before forced tapering, abandonment, and finding myself pulled into the world of advocacy, I could care for myself and felt decent enough to leave the house whenever I wanted; now I depend on my husband to help me shower even twice a week and it takes days to prepare for and recover from even one day out.

Like most pain patients, I have always used alternative treatments to limit my doses of pain medicine, but many of these alternatives are not covered by insurance. The few that ARE even partially covered by insurance have a history of making my pain worse, like expensive non-FDA approved epidural spinal injections, and NONE are an adequate replacement. My story is an echo of any one of the millions of pain patients across the country that are desperate for just enough relief to regain function and quality of life they lost due to the current push to restrict and reduce opioid prescribing.

While we know reducing prescribing began with honorable intentions, it has had disastrous consequences. It seems few are tracking the outcomes of those who have

been tapered or forced off their effective pain treatment, yet as early as 2010 it was proven that up to 20% of those forced off their opioid pain control would die within 2 years. Please consider amending the current law and directing other agencies to amend policies to once again encourage doctors to use their extensive clinical experience to treat pain the way each patient responds to best. Please know that other states are now recognizing that overdoses have not reduced because they were never tied to pain patients being treated effectively and are adjusting their codes and policies accordingly!