



Good afternoon Chairman Lewis, Chairwoman Hogan and Honorable members of the Committee:

My name is Lauren Deluca and I live in Worcester, Massachusetts.

I support House Bill 1181 and companion Senate Bill 1183. I suffer from a disease called chronic pancreatitis. Chronic pancreatitis is when the enzymes that digest your food back up into my pancreas and my body actually begins to digest my pancreas rather than my food. It is known to be an extremely painful condition.

Unfortunately, in the current political environment when someone like me with an extremely painful disease goes to the hospital for help, rather than properly assess my condition, ER doctors assume that I am only there as a drug seeker. Even worse, my disease is often misunderstood to be a heroin withdrawal because some of the symptoms are similar such as getting hot and cold sweats, my heart rate spikes, my face and body will heat up. I will start cyclically vomiting and I'll even lose control of my bowels.

More than one time this year I have been denied access to medication and to having my pain addressed in an emergency room setting. One time I was right rolled out into a cold hallway and ignored for 3 1/2 hrs. I was not given IV fluids, Zofran to control my cyclical vomiting, any sort of pain management nor even a glass of water.

The result of all this is that between May and September of this year I've lost 11 percent of my organ function and have become an intractable pain patient. Had my condition been properly addressed in May I would not be in physical condition I am in today. I have lost over 20 pounds of my bodyweight and I continue to lose weight to this day. I recently had to step down from my job as a commercial insurance agent due to the inability to eat solid foods causing me many medical issues. I actually just spent the weekend admitted to the hospital due to the numerous issues I now have as a result of not having my pain addressed properly.

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What has happened to me cannot be undone; however, I'm here today so it doesn't happen to anyone else.

I live in constant fear as I do not know whether or not I'm going to be helped next time I have an acute pancreatic attack. I worry that I won't be believed or that they're going to send me home in the midst of an attack. But even if I live through these attacks each time I will come out sicker than the time before. I was a fully functional, working woman in January of this year looking forward to starting a family. Now I am an intractable pain patient who lives in constant fear of what is going to happen to me.

My example is a great illustration of why it is important for people to get their pain properly assessed and managed when they go to a healthcare facility. Not having pain assessed and properly managed in my case has meant a serious worsening of my condition. Thank you for listening. I appreciate your time. I hope you will refer this bill favorably out of committee.

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