

December 16, 2015

US Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor & Pensions

US Senate Appropriations Committee on Labor, Health, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

US Senate Armed Services Committee

US Senate Committee on Veterans' Affairs

US House of Representatives Appropriations Committee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education and Related Agencies

US House of Representatives Armed Services Committee

US House of Representatives Committee on Veterans' Affairs

US House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce

US House of Representatives Energy & Commerce Subcommittee on Health

Re: National Pain Strategy

Dear Committee Members,

We are writing to thank you for your leadership in addressing the significant public health crisis of chronic pain, which affects 4 in 10 American adults and 80 percent of veterans returning from Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom (Institute of Medicine, 2011; Lew HL, et al., *Journal of Rehabilitation Research & Development*, 2009). Further, we seek your support in ensuring swift and complete implementation of the National Pain Strategy (NPS) upon its release. The NPS is the country's first strategic plan to improve pain research, education, care and prevention developed by six federal agencies, including the National Institutes of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Defense, Department of Veterans Affairs, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality and US Food and Drug Administration, along with 80 nominated experts from the medical-scientific, public, private, patient and advocacy communities.

Included in Section 4305 of the Affordable Care Act were several key pain-related provisions. The first provision directed the Institute of Medicine (IOM) to assess the country's state of pain research, education, care and treatment. In June 2011, the IOM released their findings in the seminal report, *Relieving Pain in America*, which documented the profound human and economic cost of chronic pain on our nation. One hundred million American adults suffer with life-altering chronic pain disorders. With an annual cost burden of \$600 billion, chronic pain equals a national epidemic with costs far exceeding that of any other disease state or disorder in our country. As noted in the IOM report and highlighted in the U.S. Senate HELP Committee hearing, *Pain in America*, convened on February 14, 2012, despite its substantial impact, the federal research investment in chronic pain is glaringly inadequate – averaging just \$0.04 per affected individual. Further, the current state of educational and training efforts, medical care and treatment of chronic pain fall way short of what is needed to address this national health crisis.

As such, the IOM report called for the development of a comprehensive population-level strategy to advance pain research, education, care and prevention. In 2012, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health (OASH) of the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) directed the Interagency Pain Research Coordinating Committee of the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to lead the development of the National Pain Strategy. Six federal agencies, including the NIH, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Department of Veterans Affairs, Department of Defense, Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality, Food and Drug Administration, along with 80 nominated experts from the medical-scientific, public, private, patient and advocacy communities participated in its development over a two-year period. The NPS outlines short, medium and long-term goals, identifies key federal and non-federal stakeholders, and recommends tools to measure progress in six priority areas: Population-Level Pain Research; Pain Prevention and Care; Pain Care Service Delivery and Reimbursement; Professional Education and Training; Pain Disparities; and Public Education and Communication. The final report was submitted to OASH in October 2014, and was released by OASH for public comment earlier this year. It is our understanding that earlier this month, the NPS entered the final stages of clearance by the six involved federal agencies, and that the final version of the report is expected to be released in early 2016.

In response to the country's urgent need to advance initiatives outlined in the National Pain Strategy, in March 2014, leaders of 16 consumer pain advocacy organizations, representing hundreds of thousands of Americans living with chronic pain, came together to form the Consumer Pain Advocacy Task Force (CPATF). The CPATF is united with one goal – to work collectively to promote, support and monitor the implementation of the National Pain Strategy. The CPATF stands ready and eager to do its part in supporting and assisting all of the named federal agencies in implementing the Plan. To ensure that swift and complete implementation the National Pain Strategy commences upon its release, the CPATF, numerous organizations and thousands of individuals affected by chronic pain have written to HHS, calling upon the Department to be proactive and immediately begin the process of: 1) developing a federal oversight body responsible for overseeing full implementation of the NPS, and 2) budgeting for these efforts now.

Millions of American families – many of whom who have bravely and honorably served their country – have waited far too long for the country to advance initiatives needed to improve their health and quality of life, as well as their ability to fully contribute to society. They and the country at large cannot wait any longer for this to happen and are in urgent need of your full and unwavering support. We urge you to review a draft of the NPS, which can be viewed [online](http://iprcc.nih.gov/docs/DraftHHSNationalPainStrategy.pdf) (<http://iprcc.nih.gov/docs/DraftHHSNationalPainStrategy.pdf>) or requested from the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Health. Upon the Plan's release, we will seek your support in securing the necessary financial resources and oversight to ensure that the NPS is fully and strategically implemented. Millions of Americans are counting on you to do your part to ensure that the NPS is transformed from words on a page to real, effective and impactful change for themselves and their families.

If we can provide further information or assistance, please contact us by email at info@ConsumerPainAdvocacy.org or call CPATF members, Amy Goldstein at 913-484-2120 or Christin Veasley at 401-316-2089.

With sincere appreciation,

American Cancer Society Cancer Action Network*
American Chronic Pain Association*
American Lyme Disease Foundation
Arthritis Foundation
Caregiver Action Network
Chronic Pain Research Alliance*
Dr. Susan Love Research Foundation
Ehlers-Danlos National Foundation
For Grace
Global Healthy Living Foundation*
Hereditary Neuropathy Association
Intercultural Cancer Council National and Mid-Atlantic Region
Interstitial Cystitis Association*
Lupus Foundation of America
National Fibromyalgia & Chronic Pain Association*
National Multiple Sclerosis Society
National Patient Advocate Foundation*
Neuropathy Action Foundation
Pain Connection*
Pain Action Alliance to Implement a National Strategy (PAINS)*
Power of Pain Foundation*
Project Lazarus
Reflex Sympathetic Dystrophy Syndrome Association*
State Pain Policy Advocacy Network*
Solve ME/CFS Initiative
The Foundation for Peripheral Neuropathy*
The Pain Community*
The TMJ Association*

United Spinal Association
US Pain Foundation*
Wings for Warriors

**Members of the Consumer Pain Advocacy Task Force*

cc: Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary, US Department of Health and Human Services
Dr. Karen DeSalvo, Acting Assistant Secretary for Health, US Department of Health and Human Services
Dr. Wanda Jones, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Health, US Department of Health and Human Services