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BORDER AND MARITIME SECURITY
SUBCOMMITTEE ON COUNTERTERRORISM
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July 30, 2012

The Honorable Margaret Hamburg, M.D.
Commissioner, Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
Silver Spring, Maryland 20993

Dear Commissioner Hamburg,

On October 29th and 30th, the FDA's Drug Safety and Risk Management Advisory Committee will be holding a meeting to discuss the public health benefits and risks, including the potential for abuse, of drugs containing hydrocodone either combined with other analgesics or as an antitussive. I respectfully request that this meeting include a significant amount of public participation so the Advisory Committee can fully understand the impact abuse of these drugs have had on my constituents. I specifically request that members of the group "Save the Michaels of the World," a group of parents who have tragically lost children due to prescription drug addiction and abuse be given the opportunity to present.

As you know, the President's Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Plan has determined the problem of prescription drug abuse to be an epidemic. According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2009 16 million Americans age 12 and older had taken prescription pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, or sedatives for nonmedical purposes. And as the use of prescription drugs continues to increase, the scale of the problem will only continue to grow unless we are proactive in ameliorating the mechanisms that allow abuse and addiction to occur.

One of the mechanisms the federal government possesses to fight back against addiction and abuse is the process upon which prescription drugs are classified and labeled for risk, of which your agency has direct jurisdiction. The October meeting of your Advisory Committee on this issue is very important to the future of how the federal government attacks the issue of prescription drug abuse. The parents and advocates of Save the Michaels of the World have a very important message that the Advisory Committee needs to hear. I would appreciate your consideration of providing them with a full and fair opportunity to present their stories before the Advisory Committee.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,



BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress