

Written Testimony  
For  
Mr. Vernon Porter

Good Afternoon, I want to thank Senator Feinstein and Senator Grassley for inviting us here today to share our story.

My name is Vernon Porter. On June 17th 2010 my daughter Vanessa Corielle Porter passed away from an accidental overdose . The drug was Opana. It was just four days after her 22nd birthday.

Vanessa was a beautiful and vibrant young woman who had a lasting and powerful impact on many lives. Vanessa was the student of the month so many times in elementary school it was hard to keep up with the awards. She completed high school a semester early with a 3.8 GPA and and finished her first semester at Saddleback college with the same high marks. Vanessa was a gifted musician and vocalist as well, studying violin and piano from the age of eight years old. Vanessa sang, danced and preformed with summer outreach programs.

From a very young age Vanessa started working in the children's ministry at the church where I was on staff and her heart for service and friends lasted throughout her short life. If you had a problem you called Vanessa. She was steadfast in her relationships and commitments. Vanessa had a beautiful and welcoming spirit.

On the night Vanessa lost her life I was at a late staff meeting arriving home at midnight. Vanessa was staying with us for two weeks waiting for her new place to become available. When I saw that she wasn't home I became concerned. I called her cell and it went to voice mail and after waiting a few minutes called her again. I repeated this for an hour and at 1:00 AM her phone was shut off.

I called all night and the next day, this was not like my daughter. Around 3:30 the next afternoon I received a call from one of Vanessa's friends screaming into my phone saying "say it's not true, tell me she's not dead". There are no words to explain the emotions that overwhelm you after receiving a call like that. I immediately called the coroner and was told "this can't be your daughter she is from the city of Lake Forest". We live in Laguna Niguel. My hopes were raised. I asked for her middle name, "it's Corielle". Dear God it was my baby.

We found out through our own efforts that Vanessa was picked up at her work by two young ladies that she had not known for very long. They went to a man's apartment named Joe Black. Mr. Black was on probation for Doctor shopping and prescription drug sales. Mr. Black provided alcohol and the drug Opana. If you're not familiar with the drug, Dr. Euthem Kontaxis head of the Emergency Department at the Eisenhower Medical Center stated " It's like taking an atom bomb to a knife fight". Dr. Kontaxis and many other Doctors don't believe it should be in the marketplace. It was banned in this country for a decade. If you remove the time release coating and consume with alcohol it is almost always fatal.

The two young women left Vanessa unconscious at Mr. Black's and he called one of them at midnight and said that Vanessa was having a hard time breathing. The young lady told him to call 911. It was Mr. Black who shut off Vanessa's cell phone at 1:00 AM. Because of Mr. Black's legal situation and fearing for his future he did nothing. Vanessa passed at 4:00 AM on June 17th. Had the call to 911 been placed at midnight she more than likely would have

survived. Mr. Black waited for more than twelve hours to call 911. The coroners office told us that Mr. Black would more than likely be charged in my daughters death but to our amazement was not. When I asked his probation officer to hold him accountable and revoke his probation he refused stating that "he needed to be concerned with Mr. Blacks emotional well being". Mr. Black had a long history of Dr. shopping and illegal prescription drug sales and had provided drugs to a young man who overdosed twice in ten days before Vanessa lost her life. Thankfully that young man survived. We believe that the system failed in regards to Mr. Black.

Doctor shopping is such a huge problem in Orange county that a few days ago I heard of a young woman who had 140 prescriptions for pain meds.

Since Vanessa passed we have been fighting for the Good Samaritan law in California. In the States that have this law the statistics bear out that it saves lives and does not increase risky behavior.

The damage done to families after such a meaningless and tragic loss of a loved one are far reaching. I come in contact with so many whose lives are changed forever. High divorce rates for parents who have lost a child, grandparents and siblings in therapy trying to find a new set of coping skills. Some never recover and stay disconnected for the rest of their lives. A friend of mine who is a grief care specialist told me within days of losing Vanessa that it would be two to five years before I started to come out of my grief. He was right. Trying to force your lungs to breathe in the first year is an accomplishment in itself. Asking yourself the question that will never be answered in this life,why? The reason that I bring this up is to let you know how far reaching the consequences are and the unbelievable costs to our country. With a prescription drug overdose death occurring every 19 minutes in this country (an inaccurate number that is too low) how long will it be before it touches your family?

With the destruction of our families how long can we survive as a nation? This is not hyperbole, we have a major epidemic.

We believe that an easy to implement plan of educating Pharmacists on non-conforming prescription-drug sales is a effective way to slow the supply chain. This was modeled by our family Pharmacist who stopped filling them. We have list of "Red Flags" to share. There is a group of high school students from our area that go out every weekend to pharmacies and offer them a "Red Flag" list. They are asking for help because their friends are dying. These young people are heros. Orange county is second in the nation in accidental overdose deaths.

Mandatory not voluntary prescriber education for physicians on addiction and appropriate dosages of opioids BEFORE they get their DEA license. Voluntary programs do not work! Just look at the California CURES program.

The NAPB PMP interConnect program has a 7.5 second average time for a consolidated multi-state PMP report.

The Hal Rogers Drug Monitoring Program.

The reclassification of hydrocodone combination products from schedule III to the more restrictive schedule II. Eliminating automatic refills for patients.

The use of Naloxone to prevent opioid overdose.

These are a few things that need to be implemented.

The FDA needs to step into the new millennium, their slow action on major issues is unbelievable at best.

Big Pharma lobbying is out of control. Endo is lobbying Congress to allow Psychologists to write for opiates (Opana). A friend of mine Dr. Joe Ozawa a Psychologist who just returned from 16 months in Fukushima informed me of this. Why would a Psychologist need the ability to write for pain meds? They don't, it's about profits. Psychologists that I speak with about this are not in favor of it's passing.

With medical studies proving the damage caused by drugs in young developing minds (under 25) caused by drugs ( Marijuana, Stimulants, Depressants, Nicotine, Alcohol) are we really considering allowing six year old children to be used as lab rats for Perdue Pharma by prescribing oxycontin? Have we lost our collective minds? Will the FDA approve this?

This is a huge problem with many layers but we must implement changes sooner than later. In the two years since Vanessa passed seventy two thousand people (once again a number that is too low) have died from an accidental overdose. Many of the laws that will be implemented are years away. How many more will die needlessly? How many more shattered families? If someone dropped a bomb on a city of thirty six thousand Americans a year how quickly would we respond?

As citizens we need to ask our medical profession to remember their hippocratic oath. If your Doctor informed you that he or she was prescribing synthetic heroin for your pain and you could become addicted would you still let them write it?

Vanessa's short life has had a far reaching impact. With the documentary "Behind The Orange Curtain" sharing her story it has been a call to action. There is a faith based comedy club in Anaheim named for her as a testament to her great sense of humor. At the church she attended in San Juan Capistrano they are starting "Vanessa's Fund" to help scholarship people who can't afford it into detox and recovery.

There are at least one million things I would rather be doing with Vanessa today other than sharing our story with you. It is my hope that you who are sworn to protect the citizens of this country don't view our story as just another sad tragic tale. That you will change the things that you have the power to change now, and tackle the difficult things with an unwavering commitment. There are thousands of families just like ours and we want to help stop the phone call that no one wants to answer.

Thank you for your time.

