

Bernie A Strain's Testimony before the US Senate's Special Committee on Aging at Upcoming Hearing on Prescription Drug Disposal June 30, 2010

Good afternoon Chairman Kohl, Senator Corker, my friend and Senator Casey from Pennsylvania and members of the Committee.

My name is Bernie Strain. I am a 52 year old life long Philadelphian. For 28 years I have been married to Beverly, who is here today. We had three wonderful sons together. Brian, 27, is serving our country as a Sergeant in the United States Air Force. He has served several tours overseas, one in the sands of Iraq. Andrew, 23, is a recent Penn State Grad who put himself through that great school.

Our third son, Timothy Michael Strain was 18 years of age at the time of his untimely and tragic death. Tim was soon to attend College. Early in August 2009, while working to put money away for college he severely burned his hand on a lawn mower, after touching the muffler. He was treated by a doctor and then was seen at Saint Christopher's Hospital at the Philadelphia burn unit. He was prescribed pain medication and was scheduled for skin grafts. Time went by and while at his girlfriend's mother's home, he complained of continuing severe pain in his hand. The mother, who was arrested for this act, gave him medication (methadone) from her own medicine cabinet. The mixture of drugs that were in his system killed our son that night. Timothy Michael Strain, the charming, good looking, great athlete was dead!

Months passed and a news article was published in the Philadelphia Daily News. The article was about the tragic way that our son Timmy died. After reading that newspaper article, Beverly and I wondered how medications are routinely disposed of as well as the incidence of misuse of prescription drugs. Our questioning led us to realize that there are drugs in many of our homes that are unused and outdated. If we can

dispose of cans, bottles, computers, batteries, paint, oil, etc. properly, why can't we responsibly dispose of unused and outdated medication - that could be potentially lethal?

This same newspaper article caught the attention of an environmental educator in Illinois, Paul Ritter. In my opinion, Paul is the teacher of the century! Paul and his students developed the **P2D2 Program**. This is a prescription drug give back program. Paul called my wife and me on one of our darkest days following the funeral for our youngest son. We never thought this could happen to us! It was always someone else's child pictured on that T-shirt with the words *Rest in Peace!* Paul had the answers to all of our questions. He has since become a dear friend following the night he called us and offered his sympathy. One phone call initiated a new direction in our lives – to try to turn Lemons into Lemonade. With his expertise and knowledge, he introduced us to Gail and David Katz. They too lost a son to prescription drug medication. Gail and David started the **Save a Star Foundation** in honor of their son, Daniel. Soon we were on our way to see how we were going to try to save a child, senior citizen or any other potential victim!

Mr. Chairman, you are aware that on May 24th, our Tim's birthday, a Resolution was passed in this United States Senate, calling on all 50 States to start thinking about this issue regarding how to properly dispose of unused medications. Last week, the city of Philadelphia, through a resolution that was passed in the City Council, called on our City of the first class to start a program. Councilwoman Blondell Reynolds Brown introduced the resolution and it was cosponsored by Philadelphia City Council members Tasco, Green and Jones. Through the District Attorney Seth Williams and Mayor Michael Nutter, we will soon have a program in place. We will develop a give back program where our citizens can properly dispose of medication and NOT dump them into our water system (which is a common practice) or simply throw them into the trash.

According to our water department there are 50 plus pharmaceuticals in our drinking water.

More people die in our United States from legal prescription drugs than from illegal drug use. It is our intent to save another life. It may be a member of your family. If this legislation is passed, I respectfully ask you to consider naming this ***“Timmy’s Law”*** in honor of our wonderful son.

In closing, I would ask all of the members of this committee to tell your children and family members that you love them before you leave each day to serve our great nation. As I left that fateful day to serve the citizens of Pennsylvania, I received that devastating phone call on my way to work, that Timmy was dead! You just never know. My wife and I are most sincere and dedicated to this cause as you can see by our driving here today. Our two other sons, Brian and Andrew are helping with this effort as well – and hoping to make a positive difference to our neighborhoods, city and the nation while preserving the memory of our beloved son Timothy Michael Strain as well as trying to save maybe one other life.

With Utmost Respect and Thanks,

The Strain Family

Four important websites to note:

<http://www.p2d2program.org> – see Timmy’s Story

<http://www.saveastar.org>

<http://www.friendsdontletfriendsdie.com>

Timmy’s Law on <http://www.facebook.com>