EXHIBIT 33
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HB 83

January 24, 2011

Representative David Howard, Chair
House Human Services Committee
Montana House
Helena, MT 59620

Chairman Howard and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to you today as a physician in support of HB 83.

Three years ago, I was recruited from a state with a prescription monitoring program to work at the Montana Spine and Pain Center. My family and I are thrilled to be living in such a wonderful place, and I enjoy practicing Pain Management in Montana among such hard-working, honest and friendly patients.

As a physician who has used a Prescription Drug Registry in my prior practice, I understand firsthand how useful it can be to our patients.

It makes it easier to establish a trusting relationship with patients. There is understandable concern that patients will be singled out or somehow profiled with this information. The opposite was true in my old practice. A report from the database was collected as a part of the past medical records for every patient who was new to my practice. With a Prescription Drug Registry, it became much easier to trust my patients when their story matched the report from the database.

Patients will have access to better care in a more timely manner. Hundreds of patients each year are referred to Pain specialists because the patients' primary care providers are afraid that they no longer have enough information about the patient to prescribe these medications safely. Physicians who have access to this information will be able to readily identify patients who are at risk to themselves in order to keep the patient safe from harm, and will be much more willing to care for their own patients rather than making all patients who need prescription pain medication wait several months to see a specialist.

It is easier to identify patients with behavior suggestive of chemical dependency or criminal intent. The rampant fear among physicians is that with no Prescription Drug Registry, professional drug seekers are easily able to con well-intended physicians out of a handful of profitable drugs, often targeting several practices each day. I am also concerned that our lack of a prescription database has allowed professional drug seekers to target Montana from surrounding states with prescription databases. Prescribers need this information made more accessible in a Prescription Drug Registry in order to protect the citizenry of Montana from drug diversion and chemical dependency. In my former practice, it was much easier to identify which patients required confrontation and help with their pattern of problem behavior. I will always remember the 72-year-old woman who finally went to rehab for her prescription drug problem because I was willing and able to confront her with the truth about her behavior.

This is not a new invasion of privacy. There is also concern that this legislation represents a new invasion of privacy. It is important to remember that all the information that we are currently discussing is already legally available to us as prescribers. What is being proposed would make its availability much more clinically useful.

Reformatting prescription information into a database will allow physicians to better care for both our patients with pain and our patients with chemical dependency. It will also help to protect our citizens from drug diversion, and make Montana a less attractive target for criminals. I'd like to thank Representative Tom Berry for sponsoring this bill that calls for creating a Prescription Drug Registry (PDR), and I would urge you to vote affirmative.

Sincerely,

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