**Written Testimony**

**Wendy Foster, U.S. Pain Foundation**

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Thank you for inviting me to testify today. My name is Wendy Foster, and I am Senior State Advocate for US Pain Foundation, an organization founded by people with pain, for people with pain.

I suffer from an unknown neuromuscular disorder, Parkinson’s Disease, effects of a stroke, severe migraines, spinal stenosis, restrictive lung disease, and chronic pain. I’d like to ask you, if you would, to imagine yourself with pain. Not pain that can be handled with an aspirin, but severe, unrelenting, chronic pain. That is how a person with pain, like me, feels every minute of every day.

Additionally, I now have to worry about how my health is going to be managed and/or mismanaged due to the cruel efforts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act.

I now have to worry about higher premiums and increased restrictions on my care. Due to the Affordable Care Act tug of war that is going on in our country, there are a lot of unanswered questions and concerns that are causing me undue stress and anxiety.

According to a recent *Practical Pain Management*(PPM) survey, 67% of physicians say their patients expressed concern that an ACA repeal might prevent them from seeing their doctors.

The Affordable Care Act, while far from perfect, has expanded coverage to millions of Americans who were previously unable to afford health insurance.
It also protected individuals with pre-existing conditions and ensured that every health plan offered consistent essential benefits. Seven years later, I thought the national debate would be about developing a healthcare system that's affordable, high quality and convenient for everyone. Unfortunately, for patients like me, that is not the case. Instead of talking about how best to advance the healthcare system, we are take steps backwards. The repeal is a proposal to undo key protections of the ACA.

We are now talking about cutting taxes for the wealthiest Americans by taking billions out of Medicaid. This means 22 million individuals would lose health coverage, according to an analysis by the Congressional Budget Office. Medicaid, while it does have it flaws, is a vital safety net that protects the health and well-being of those who need it most. It is also a lifeline for other vulnerable populations, including those living with chronic conditions and/or working people who don't have the option of employer-sponsored health benefits and don't make enough money to afford private insurance.

My daughter is here with me today. She, too, will be impacted by this repeal, due to the included language that would defund Planned Parenthood. One in five women in America has relied on Planned Parenthood – my daughter included. This proposal would deny millions of women access to cancer screenings, birth control, and other vital testing and treatment.

Pulling the rug out from us—many who now have coverage and care for the first time—is not the answer and it is simply inhumane.

ACA repeal does not protect me; it allows insurance companies to take advantage of me. The repeal will allow insurance companies to significantly raise healthcare premiums. The ACA repeal will make insurance coverage unaffordable for millions and raise costs for those who can afford it. ACA repeal should not move forward until a comprehensive replacement plan that provides equal or better coverage options is developed. All Americans, like my daughter, and myself deserve guaranteed, high-quality, affordable healthcare.