PAIN CARE COALITION

A National Coalition for Responsible Pain Care

American Academy of Pain Medicine • American Headache Society • American Pain Society
American Society of Anesthesiologists

February 9, 2012

Dear Senator Burr:

Re: HELP Committee Hearing on IOM Pain Report

On the afternoon of **February 14**th, the Senate HELP Committee will hold the first Congressional hearing to review the Institute of Medicine's (IOM) ground-breaking 2011 report on pain, *Relieving Pain in America: A Blueprint for Transforming Prevention, Care, Education and Research.* The Pain Care Coalition, representing the country's leading pain clinicians, researchers and educators, hopes you can attend this important hearing, and show your support for the IOM's call to action to improve pain care in this country.

The Pain Care Coalition was an initial proponent of the National Pain Care Policy Act, championed in the Senate by Senators Hatch and Dodd, and we worked strenuously for its enactment. The IOM's recent report is an outgrowth of that effort, as are important efforts to enhance pain research at NIH, and to improve pain care for active duty military personnel and veterans in both the military and VA health systems.

The IOM found the basic facts to be staggering. 116 million adults are burdened with chronic pain—more than those afflicted by heart disease, diabetes and cancer combined. The prevalence of chronic pain will only increase as the population ages and the effects of obesity manifest themselves in pain-related conditions like diabetes and musculoskeletal pain. Chronic pain costs the American economy between \$ 560-635 billion in added health care and lost productivity. Federal and state programs absorbed almost \$100 billion in pain care costs in 2008. Human suffering is enormous; worse, it is often unnecessary—millions of people get inadequate pain relief for conditions that could be effectively treated or managed.

The IOM has recommended a comprehensive strategy to address this many faceted public health crisis, which it characterized as being of "epidemic" proportions. The response to this problem requires vigorous action, and long term commitments, by both government and the private sector. The Pain Care Coalition strongly urges you to join in this effort, and we look forward to working with you to reduce the human suffering this epidemic represents.

Scott M. Fishman, M.D.

Chair