

## PE1651/VVVVV

Anonymous submission of 30 January 2018

I was taking Klonopin as prescribed by my doctor from June of 2007 until February of 2012. Over this time my health declined in many ways including the emergence of nerve, joint, and muscle pain, gastric problems, increased anxiety and depression, brain fog, confusion, sleep disturbances, exercise intolerance, and other strange symptoms. After much research online I found thousands of others suffering with similar symptoms that seemed to be directly related to their use of Benzodiazepines. I then began my journey to withdraw from the medication. But as I found out later--too late-- that hardly any medical professionals know how to safely withdraw people from this class of drug. So what should have been at least a 2 year taper ended up being a 2 month taper--effectively a cold turkey. What followed, and continues to occur 5 years later, is the stuff of nightmares.

I was thrust into a world of hurt with raging anxiety, suicidal ideation, terror states, depersonalization, derealization, memory impairment, loss of cognitive function, inability to care for myself in basic ways such as cooking, driving, and shopping. I had 2 hospitalizations which lasted 2 weeks each during which more psychotropic drugs were added in an attempt to "treat" the withdrawal and my supposed "underlying condition" for which the Klonopin was originally prescribed. I began taking Klonopin when I began having panic attacks shortly after my dad died in 2007. The anxiety and host of other symptoms that appeared while on Klonopin and intensified after stopping the drug were not even remotely similar to the degree of anxiety I felt when my father died. What I was experiencing on Klonopin and after discontinuing it were clearly a result of the side effects of the drug and a withdrawal syndrome and NOT any underlying condition.

In the years following this period I have had to completely alter my life and lifestyle. I could no longer work and had to apply for disability. As a single parent with no partner I had to get someone to live with me so that I could continue to care for my kids. There were different stages to the healing but there have been stretches of time where I was so cognitively impaired I could not even figure out how to make a sandwich. I would open the refrigerator and stare at the contents. I knew what I needed but somehow could not put the pieces together. Much of that has gotten better but many other symptoms still persist--especially the fear and anxiety states.

It's been devastating to every aspect of my life. My kids have had to cope with having a mom who is extremely limited in what she can do, and where she can go. They've had to accommodate having non-family members live with us in order to keep the house running as smoothly as possible. And although I've managed to keep taking care of them emotionally and coordinating logistics from the couch, I have to miss most of the outings, school performances and the like that their dad, my mom and other family members get to attend--it's truly heartbreaking for all involved.

If Bill H.3594<sup>1</sup> were in place years ago when I was first prescribed a Benzodiazepine I most certainly would have avoided the immeasurable suffering that my family and I

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<sup>1</sup> <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/190/H3594>

have endured. Please pass this bill and prevent others from having their lives devastated. Thank you.