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May 15, 1992

To Whom It May Concern,

I never thought I would be writing a letter like this, but as life continues to disappoint me I find that I have to. My situation is not all that extraordinary. Heck, my story is probably quite common, but hopefully not too common.

I am 24 years old. I found out I was HIV positive in August of 1991. The only reason I discovered my health problem was because I had applied for health insurance. I of course was denied coverage. I had been unable to get health insurance for the few years prior to this because I was involved in a serious car accident. A drunk driver had run a light and slammed my car. I went through many surgeries over the next few years, and insurance companies considered me "uninsurable".

Approximately a week after I discovered I was HIV positive I received another smack in the face from my doctor. He informed me that my T-cells were low and I had to begin treatment immediately. My T-cells were just above 200. In one week I discovered my HIV status, and I also needed to begin treatment immediately. My doctor started me on AZT, Dapsone, Diflucan and Zovirax (as well as vitamin supplements).

I take six AZT a day. I take two Dapsone pills every other day. I take one Diflucan every other day. I take two Zovirax every day. The AZT costs approximately \$1.50 per pill. The Dapsone is approximately .25 cents per pill. The Diflucan is approximately \$15.00 per pill. The Zovirax is approximately .85 cents per pill. So each year my approximate cost for medicine is \$7,026.00 or \$585.50 a month. (I have been told that I may need to add DDC to this list if my T-cells do not improve and I have no idea what that will cost).

All of the money for the medicine is paid for by myself and my ever loving and caring parents. I have no insurance to cover these costs. I also have no money left to keep paying for these medicines.

Even if I did not have to pay for my medicine, I would still have doctor bills to pay. I see my HIV doctor once a month. He is a good doctor. I feel like my life is in good hands and I feel safe being a patient of his. I do not want to see a free doctor. I have been told by many people that they would not send their worst enemy to Primary Health Care (even if I did want to go to Primary Health Care they have a three month waiting list for appointments!). My HIV doctor bills are approximately \$200.00 a month. However, every three months my doctor has to run a large series of tests and they cost over \$680.00. So my HIV doctor bills are approximately \$4,320.00 a year, or \$360.00 a month.

Aside from my HIV doctor I must also have my eyes checked every three months. My eyes are checked for CMV Retinitis. It can cause blindness and people that are HIV infected should be checked every three months for it. The bill, each time I go, is approximately \$75.00. So, just for my eyes, I pay approximately \$300.00 a year or \$25.00 a month.

Now, If we tally up my total overhead (for routine medical care only), I have to pay out approximately \$970.50 each and every month. This total is only if I do not have to pay for any additional medicine, doctors visits, or unexpected illnesses. Also, this total does not include the simple things in life like rent, food, gas, insurance (auto), electric, phone, repairs to my car, dog food for my closest companion or any of the many other aspects of just getting through life.

I make \$300.00 a week. It is not a great salary, but it is an average salary. After you subtract my routine medical needs from my salary I have \$229.50 a month. This figure of approximately \$230.00 needs to supply me with a months worth of rent, food, ect. If we figure out the totals by the year it is as follows: I make \$15,600.00 (before taxes) and my pay-out for health care (if nothing happens or I do not have to start any additional medicines) is \$11,646.00. So before Uncle Sams cut, I have \$3,954.00 to live on for a whole year. Impossible you say - well I have to agree with you. It is impossible to live on that. Again, if it were not for my parents always helping me I would probably have cashed in my chips by now.

Actually, I do not think I could ever kill myself. Although I have considered it many times, I just could not do that. Besides, there are so many beautiful things here on Earth. I notice every sunset, every bright star, every bird, all of our wildlife, and our great sandy beaches. You know I even notice people, it's a lot of fun to people watch. Although most people are unhappy and rude I think I am kind and friendly to everyone. I can't understand how people go around grumpy and upset all of the time. What a waste of their lives. I hope something changes soon. I would love to live to see the day that everyone lives on Earth happy as opposed to this planet filled with hate that we are all revolving on.

Whew! I had to end that paragraph, it was making me cry too much and this keyboard was shorting out.

As I stated earlier, my parents pay for almost all of my medical care. I can not tolerate that anymore. To tell you a little about my parents, they have always been great people. I remember when I was younger my father worked two or three jobs to make ends meet. My mother also worked as I was growing up. Even working the way that they did, they always took care of my brother, my sister and I. They worked to make our lives better and I love them so much for always caring for us. They didn't drink and they didn't do drugs it seems like all they ever did was work. Now, they were not perfect, but they are as close as anyone will come to being perfect. Well, I think you have read plenty about myself and my family, so now I will get to my problem.

According to government standards I make too much money to be entitled to any benefits. I don't even qualify for any of the pharmaceutical companies programs. I am not looking for hand outs. I am not that type of person. I have always worked hard and I want to continue working until the day I die. Let's think about this.....I make too much money for any type of assistance. I did not know that \$1,200.00 a month was a lot of money. I do not want anything for free, I would just like to see some kind of reduction in my medical bills. Maybe half price medicines.

I have talked to many federal and state agencies and they have all told me basically the same thing. I fall in the middle class section of America (at \$300.00 a week before taxes) and there is nothing anyone can do to help me. It has been suggested to me that I quit my job and go on welfare. At least then I will be entitled benefits and I can get my medicines for free, as well as Social Security, food stamps, ect.

My problem is I do not want to do this. I want to continue being a productive member of society. I do not want to be a burden on my family, my friends, or on society.

I guess for now I will have to continue relying on my parents. They are not rich. Heck, they are far from rich. I just feel so bad about taking anything more from them (and they will keep giving until every penny of theirs is gone). There is no guarantee that I will live for any great length of time. Once I am gone and my parents are too old to work and they are completely broke (because of my bills) what are they going to do? Where will they go? I also have a 27 year old brother and a 15 year old sister. I do not think that they should be financially neglected because of me! I am also concerned for my brother and sister and AIDS. Everyone on this planet should be concerned about AIDS. So, what should I do?

I do not know. I am out of answers. Everyday I sit around trying to think of some way to pay for medicine, bills, ect. I sit around hoping and praying I do not come down with any of the opportunistic infections or any other illness. There seems to be no answers though. I guess that is why I am finally writing this letter. Heck, I don't even know who I am going to send it to (that is why it is not addressed to anyone). I guess this letter is for everyone and that is who I will send it out to. My only problem is I am not sure anyone out there in this "gimmee, gimmee" world will even care.

I guess I am just hoping for a miracle - not just for myself, but for everyone in my situation. Please do something, say something, write something, get something done. Please don't just sit there and say, "Oh what a sad letter". Please for all of the other humans here on Earth, lets all do something to help.

I wish everyone on this planet a chance to have parents as extraordinary as mine. I also wish they could have great siblings like I do. I know that wish is not possible though. Maybe, instead, people will be able to find such good friends they will consider each other family....because we all are!

T.R. Martin
Fort Lauderdale, Florida

The following list shows who I have mailed copies to:

The Ft Lauderdale News Sun Sentinel
The Miami Herald
President George Bush
Vice-President Dan Quayle
Senator Bob Graham
Senator Connie Mack
Rep. E. Clay Shaw
The Weekly News
The Advocate
AmFar
The Blade
Center One
Health and Rehabilitative Services
Magic Johnson
Wellcome Burroughs Pharmaceutical Co.
Centers for Disease Control
World Health Organization
The Surgeon General
Governor Lawton Chiles
Dear Abby
Ann Landers
Mom & Dad

Tom Martin
P.O. Box 22580
Tamarac, FL 33320

You Know! The Pres.
Mr Watch MY UPS!

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FROM WASHINGTON, D.C.

The Presidents Council for AIDS,
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20510

ATTN: MAGIC Johnson