



Oct. 15, 2012

To the Honorable Shelley C. Chapman:

My name is Balinda Brown widow of Sharrell Brown, a coal miner with Eastern Associated and Peabody and Patriot coal Co. My husband was diagnosed with Acute Myloid Leukemia. My husband passed away June 6, 2006 with Leukemia due to the chemicals that he worked with at Patriot Coal that had Benzodine in them. He worked there 35 years, he never worked for another coal mines. He had Leukemia for 3 years. In 3 years he spent most of that time in the hospital taking treatments. Finally they sent him to Morgantown to have a bone marrow transplant. We were there for 6 months, but without success, he passed away there in Morgantown. His medical cost was 1.4 million dollars.

Without medical benefits our retirees couldn't pay for their medical expenses. Even if they have Medicare they could not pay the huge 20% copays.

My father and grandfather were also life long coal miners. They were proud men. My grandfather was one of the founders

of the union. He marched when we had no union. It is so hard for the wives to watch their husbands go off to work and the widows think of the days they watches their husbands go off to work. They would say a little prayer to keep their husbands safe and bring them home to his family. They wait for the time for thier husbands to be home. When the vehicles pull in the driveways and this man who is coal black and all you can see is the whites of his eyes coming towards the house. A sigh of relief comes over the family to see him walk through thier door.

Then there are those women who gets a phone call saying there has been a accident in the mines and your husband is hurt or worse. Your heart sick not knowing his condition. Then there are those women who watches her husband give his health for the coal mines. He works 16 hours a day just to make a decent living for his family. He does this for years. All of a sudden your husband isn't as strong as he once was. Breathing gets much harder, he gets weak faster, but with this he still goes under the ground to make that money for his family, that is what a Coal Miner does, he is proud to be a coal miner. The day comes when his breathing is so bad that the doctor says it is enough. The Doctor pulls him out of the mines due to his health. A big part

of him stays in that mountain. It is never the same. Once he retires he spends more time in the Doctors office than he does at home.

Please, let me invite you to come and visit the mines and talk to the retirees and the widows. Listen to their stories (though some will be on oxygen just to catch their breath). They will tell you what is was like to be a coal miner. You will see the widows with their heads held high, and telling their stories of how their husband gave their life to the mines and that they are proud to be a miners widow. It is our way of life here in West Virginia and has been for generations. We are proud of our heritage. A coal miner has a heart like no other man you will ever know to work in a deep dark hole.

I feel if you knew us you would agree the hearing should be in Charleston, WV.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. May God richly Bless you and keep you.

**A Coal Miners Widow,
Balinda Brown
Balinda Brown**