



Natasha Bhagat
9451 River Road
Potomac, Maryland 20854

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Re: SB 147/HB 59

Dear Chairman Pinsky and Chairwoman McIntosh:

My name is Natasha Bhagat. I'm a junior at American University. I went to Montgomery College in Rockville before that. I'm a Young Invisible – the name we young adults with chronic conditions call ourselves because the world doesn't see us.

I have uncontrolled epilepsy, which means I have seizures that are unpredictable and dangerous. My biggest fear is that I can get hurt in a fall or die. I don't like the limitations it puts on me—after all, I can't drive or even live on my own.

But my medical condition doesn't define me. I love dance, music, and art. I'm a second degree martial artist and I know what it takes to accomplish goals. But I need understanding and support because my epilepsy cannot be controlled.

I especially needed that support in college. But I never got it. Like every other student I went to college dreaming that I would get a degree, make friends, and have a boyfriend. But something else came first – my health condition.

The time and energy I had to devote to my health did not leave room for both academics and a social life. I had to choose between them, and I chose my studies. I could only take 1-2 courses a semester but I was determined to do well in them. But my commitment to my health and academics was not met by a commitment from the university to help me in return.



The university's health center didn't want to deal with me. Instead, I was sent to campus security so they had my information in case I had a seizure. What kind of message did that give me? I'm a security risk, not a human being with a health condition??

For academics, I was sent to Disability Support Services. I could get disability accommodations, but that failed to address my chronic and unpredictable medical needs. Even though I met with each of my professors to explain my situation, many refused to accommodate me. Some were great -- and then I did well. But others refused to work with me and that made me feel bad, guilty, anxious and stressed and that made my seizures worse. When that happened, my doctor would change my medicines which caused side effects or withdrawal symptoms. My performance and attendance dropped. I had to medically withdraw from so many courses and that made me feel like a failure.

There are 2 things that stand out. I worked very hard and was named to the dean's list with a 3.8 GPA. This made me feel good, even though I was missing out on with no social life. I couldn't live on campus because there were no supports in case I got sick. At one point, my doctor was making medication changes to undo the mess an earlier doctor had made with my medicines. Adding or increasing medicines cause side effects and weaning medicines causes serious withdrawal symptoms. I was so sick, I had to take an incomplete in a finance class. I was still sick the following semester so my professor extended the incomplete. But that summer, the administration gave me an F without telling my professor or me. I was devastated. I had never gotten an F in my entire life. My health suffered and I couldn't take classes that fall.

Last year, I decided I could not go back to the university. It's just too scary. While some professors were great, I've had too many memories that are traumatic. This was a very hard decision, after spending so many years and so much money. Now, I have to figure out what I can do with my life. There is no guidance from anyone, except my family. And they don't know what to do.

My hope today is that my difficult experience will help wake people up and bring about change. Young Invisibles need the college experience just as much as anyone else. Maybe more. Colleges could help us live in dorms, have lounges, obtain counseling and learn to effectively self-manage our health and navigate the health system. We need to have internships, apprenticeships, work experiences and career counseling. None of that is happening. Which leaves young people like me to ask: Why are they ignoring us??

Thank you.

Natasha Bhagat

Young Invisible, [Invisible Wave Movement](#)