Written Testimony of
Audrey Tavel
Wednesday, March 12, 2008
Joint Committee on Public Health

SB654, An Act Concerning the Availability of Prescribed Antiepileptic Drugs

My name is Audrey Lee Tavel, and I would sincerely like to thank you for your time today, in allowing me to speak on behalf of Senate Bill #654, An Act Concerning the Availability of Prescribed Antiepileptic Drugs. This bill is very important to me, because I have lived with Epilepsy since I was seven years old. I am the only person in my family with Epilepsy and no family history of anyone in my family that ever had Epilepsy. My doctors have told me that the cause of my Epilepsy was the result of having the German measles, which put me in a coma for a long time and I nearly died. That is why I lived with Epilepsy my entire life. I had to learn how to cope with petit mal seizures, which for a young child was not very easy and this is why;

I never knew when my seizures were going to happen and when they did they would last about 3 minutes or longer. My face would turn from a normal color rosy red to a flesh white color and I would look like I went somewhere else for a while. When I was finished having my seizure, I felt like someone had knocked the wind right out of me, leaving me totally exhausted and so sick to my stomach that their were times I could not even finish my dinner at night. Sometimes after my seizure, I had to go right to bed, especially when I had a seizure at mealtime. I also felt lonely when my seizures occurred because I felt like no one really understood what I went through.

Two years ago, (when I was forty-eight) I finally got my driver's license, and I have my husband to thank to for that because he instilled the lost hope that I had once had as a teenager to drive. This was a major undertaking for me because I was not able to work because my doctor had to take me off my old medications slowly and try to put me on the newer medications to see which ones worked best for me. This meant that I was always exhausted and some days I didn't know if I was going to see the next day. Once we were able to find the right medication that kept my seizures under control, it took me two years for my body to adjust to it and for me to feel like my old self again.

The medications I am currently taking are Keppra, Lyrica, Zonegran. They have allowed me to live a more normal life. I cannot risk having the manufacturer of my medications changed from one to another and having my life revert back to the way it once was. I do not understand why a pharmacist would want to switch my medications without the consent of my physician and risk great personal harm to me. It is so vitally important to my living conditions that the legislature passes this bill so that I and other people with Epilepsy do not have to go through what I went through as a child, a teenager and adult. And most importantly we can continue to live the life that we so much deserve. In order to do so we need to maintain the high quality of our medications and again to do this we need the legislatures support in passing Senate bill #654.

Thank you so much for your time today.