

*Laurel H. Wood, MPA  
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January 1, 2004

Judge William J. Haynes, Jr.  
U.S. District Judge  
c/o Peter J. Strianse, Esq.  
Tune, Entrekin and White, PC  
Suite 2100, AmSouth Center  
315 Deaderick Street  
Nashville, TN 37238-2100

Dear Judge Haynes:

I currently serve as the Director of the Immunization Program for the Alaska Department of Health and Social Services. Prior to obtaining this position, I served in the Tennessee Department of Health and Environment as the Director of the HIV/AIDS Program (1986-1993) and as the Chief for the Communicable Disease Control Section (1994-1995). During my tenure as Director of Tennessee's HIV/AIDS Program, it was my honor to supervise Bernie Ellis, and it is in this regard that I write you today.

Mr. Ellis served as the Director of Tennessee's HIV/AIDS Surveillance and Seroprevalence Program from 1987 through 1990. During this time, a great deal of fear and misunderstanding surrounded AIDS issues. The need for accurate, complete, and understandable data was of extraordinary importance in helping determine how this new disease was being transmitted, and, more importantly, how this transmission could be prevented. No one excelled at the analysis of this complicated data more than Bernie. He was able to take mounds of data and turn it into understandable information that, in turn, helped guide Tennessee's HIV education and prevention efforts.

Perhaps even greater than Bernie's exceptional gift for assessing and explaining complicated data, though, was his ability to remain in touch with the impact of this disease on human beings. He was not simply a "numbers man". Rather, his compassion for the persons dealing with this disease was clear, and it greatly assisted his ability to obtain the trust of persons working in the HIV/AIDS community. This was particularly critical during these early days of the disease when fear, paranoia, and mistrust of government officials were prevalent.

**Judge William J. Haynes, Jr.**

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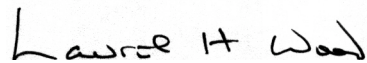
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I recognize that everything I have described occurred several years ago. I have neither worked with nor seen Bernie since I moved to Alaska in 1995. I am confident, however, that his basic integrity and compassion remain unchanged. These qualities were part of Bernie's basic character, and they have not been altered over the years. In addition, Bernie was (and is) a man of strong convictions, and it is no surprise that his convictions have led to his current situation. His belief in the importance of marijuana use for medical purposes is one that is being adopted by many state governments, including my own state of Alaska. And his desire to help others in need is in keeping with the basic values he has displayed over many years of work in public health.

I believe that Bernie Ellis is a man of great talent. His knowledge, caring and understanding of many of the health issues facing our country today should not be stifled. It is my sincere hope that you will take this into consideration as you deliberate upon a decision that impacts not only his future, but also that of many persons around the country who could benefit from his expertise.

I am sorry that I am unable to travel from Alaska to appear in person with this testimony. I hope you will value the sincerity with which it is written, however. If I may be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me as shown below.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Laurel H. Wood". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Laurel H. Wood

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