

14696 COMPETITIVE PROBLEMS IN THE DRUG INDUSTRY

Statement by:

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Distinguished Senators, Ladies, and Gentlemen:

I am glad to learn that the Subcommittee is studying various problems of prescription drugs, and I am particularly glad that the committee has asked me to give my views on the possible teratogenicity of the anti-obesity drugs, since the opportunity allows me to act in what I consider a most important role as an advocate for the unborn child. Before I discuss the possible teratogenicity of the anti-obesity drugs specifically, I would like to give a brief overview of the problem of drugs and teratogenicity in general. Teratogenicity is the capacity of an agent to malform the embryo and the agent is called a teratogen.

The thalidomide tragedy has focused attention on the effects of drugs in early pregnancy. Currently, according to the March of Dimes, 250,000 American babies are born each year with mental or physical defects. 500,000 defective fetuses are lost each year in spontaneous abortions and stillbirths. Birth defects cause additionally about 560,000 deaths annually. The survivors are afflicted with blindness, hearing impairments, heart or circulatory defects, mental retardation,