

**Opening Statement of the Honorable Tim Murphy
Chairman, Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
“Broad Review of Concussions: Initial Roundtable”
March 14, 2016**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

We are here today because a lot of people are paying attention to the issue of concussions. There’s a new and provocative movie that’s getting attention. We have mounting evidence regarding the prevalence of concussions in sports and the military, as well as the broader population. From parents and patients to athletes and service members, people are worried. They hear more-and-more about the dangers, the potential long-term effects and want to know if they, or their family members, are at risk.

Of course, that hasn’t always been the case. Less than two decades ago, concussions were barely a blip on the national radar screen. Whether you fell off a ladder, got hit by a pitch, or detonated a breaching charge, it was a bump on the head, “got your bell rung,” a no-big-deal type of injury.

So we’ve come a long way from the wave-it-off, tough-it-out attitude of the not too distant past. Now the public is concerned and looking for answers. Children bump their heads all the time –Where do you draw the line between boo-boo and ER visit? Is it safe to play contact sports? Is my memory loss due six years of high school and college football or something else? Are my mood swings a result of post-traumatic stress from two tours in Iraq, or are they somehow tied to my training or perhaps that car accident back in ’95?

It’s a good thing that we’re asking these questions. Unfortunately, as we sit here today, we do not yet have all the answers. And therein lays the challenge – the public wants answers that the science is not ready to provide. And so we deal with the challenge of misapprehension and the fear of what we don’t understand.

Which brings us to our task for today. Today, we begin a new chapter in the national dialogue on concussions. We are not here to re-litigate past actions, point fingers or cast blame. We are here to take a step back, to gain some perspective and to begin a conversation focused on solutions, not on problems.

We are joined today by some of the most prominent experts in this field. This is a wonderful opportunity for us to sit back and listen, to learn from these individuals and their decades of collective experience. They are here to help educate Members – and the public – about the state of the science on concussions. What do we know? What are the gaps? How do we address those gaps to achieve meaningful short-and-long term solutions?

We are also here today to make one thing clear – this is not just a sports issue or a military issue. This is a public health issue. Every year, millions of Americans not playing sports and not serving in the military suffer concussions. It can happen to anyone, anytime, anywhere. Some will recover with no noticeable affects, others will have debilitating symptoms. Why the difference? Why the disparity?

That is why we are here today – to ensure we are on the path, though it may be long, to providing the public the answers they deserve.

We will begin with a brief presentation from Dr. Baldwin from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). He will provide a brief introduction to concussions and a general overview about what we know about these injuries, their prevalence in society and information to provide a baseline for this conversation. We will then put forward a series of broad discussion questions to our participants. The questions focus on four themes:

- 1) Prominent misconceptions or underappreciated facts about concussions
- 2) Knowledge gaps in our understanding of concussions

- 3) Specific objectives that will lead to meaningful progress in minimizing the risk of concussions
- 4) Obstacles to achieving those objectives, including coordination within the research community

These questions are intended to guide the conversation among our participants and provide us, as Members, the opportunity to listen and learn from these experts. Obviously, Members are welcome to ask questions and join the discussion – we just ask that you try to keep questions focused on the discussion at hand. Assuming we have time at the end, we will have an opportunity for Q&A with the panelists to cover any outstanding areas of interest.

I would like to thank Ranking Member DeGette for her support and look forward to working with her on this endeavor.

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