

*House Committee on Education and Labor
Hearing on "The Impact of Concussions on High School Athletes"*

*Statement of Congressman Todd Russell Platts
May 20, 2010*

Thank you, Chairman Miller and Ranking Member Kline. Today we will be discussing the impact of concussions on high school athletes. As both the Co-Chair of the Congressional Traumatic Brain Injury Taskforce with Representative Bill Pascrell, and the father of two school-age sons who are very active in athletics, this is a topic I take none too lightly.

It is important to remember that concussions are Traumatic Brain Injuries, or TBIs. According to the Centers for Disease Control, each year an estimated 135,000 cases of TBI stemming from sports and recreation-related activities are treated in children ages 5-18 in emergency rooms alone. This figure does not account for the TBIs which are treated elsewhere or go undetected.

TBI can cause epilepsy and increase the risk for conditions such as Alzheimer's disease, Parkinson's disease, and other brain disorders that become more prevalent with age. What sets TBI apart from other conditions is the fact that it can cause a wide range of functional changes affecting thinking, sensation, language, and even emotions—factors which essentially make a person who they are. The troubling truth is that youth who suffer from a TBI are at an increased risk for additional TBIs in their future. As such, we must ensure that student-athletes, parents, coaches and school staff are well aware of the warning signs of TBIs and are educated in the prevention and treatment of these dangerous injuries.

I am proud to have joined with Representative Pascrell in introducing House of Representatives Bill 1347, the Concussion Treatment and Care Tools (ConTACT) Act. While the bill does not lie within jurisdiction of this committee, this legislation provides states with the tools needed to adopt and disseminate concussion management guidelines for school-sponsored sports. Specifically, it would fund schools' implementation

of computerized pre-season baseline and post-injury neuropsychological testing for student-athletes. By requiring that every student-athlete undergo a pre-season baseline assessment, physicians can determine post-injury when the student is rehabilitated and ready to get back onto the playing field. It would also help in determining if and when a student has undergone even a minor brain injury.

I very much look forward to hearing the testimony of all the witnesses today. As we move forward, I believe we must remain committed to ensuring that our Nation's young people are kept safe from this troubling injury. Thank you, and I yield back.