Congress of the United States

Members of this Congressional Committee and Mr. Chairman:

I would first like to say that I am very humbled that any member of this committee would consider what I have to say to be of importance. In no way do I consider myself an expert on steroids. I have my thoughts on what has created the current situation as it relates to high school kids in general, but my testimony is truly only personal experience and opinion.

Our experience may not have as much relevance as you would hope, but I do believe some of the core problems of our experience is universal and not related to just our community. I believe I could best serve this committee by answering your questions. However, I will try to give a sufficient accounting of my thoughts through this presentation.

There is a great deal of blame to pass around as to what I feel has contributed to the problem. If I were pressed to give the single most important problem at the high school level it would be the loss of accountability for our actions and accepting the blame for the choices we make. Parents are not the sole blame for the final actions of their children, but they are the start of holding their kids accountable. There are those who sadly make excuses for their kids and pointing fingers elsewhere.

Coaches are culpable in their drive for success measured by winning at all costs. The prevailing attitude in many schools is don't ask, don't tell. I believe in our profession but I know that in many walks of life there will always be those that do not do the right thing.

Peers place a great deal of pressure on those that might not try steroids, but for as long as there has been a gathering of youth peer pressure has played a part in doing the wrong thing. This brings me to society today and role models.

I cannot speak for the young men who have used steroids to enhance their athletic abilities but it is my belief that our kids did not try steroids simply because of some professional athlete. It is my opinion they were just trying to get bigger, faster, and stronger, the easiest and fastest way they knew how. I consider their actions selfish and ill advised.

In looking at all the circumstances, I believe they never felt what they were doing was anybodies business, and I feel they never worried about the consequences. This area of

consequence is very much a touchy subject for me and I believe this is where I have the most to say to this committee.

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Almost daily we see and hear through the media that a professional athlete has admitted to or is believed to have used illegal steroids for the purpose of enhancing their physical ability to perform. Yet to this date, the consequences of their actions have been mostly verbal threats. I do not wish any professional athlete to be made an example of, but if this committee and professional sports wants to see results they must come up with a comprehensive punishment where the youth of today will see that all levels answer for their actions.

Our kids were given felony charges and dismissed for the remaining seven games of the season. A school within a few miles of our community caught football players admittedly using illegal substances and they were only suspended for two games and have no felony records now. I do not believe that our kids or theirs should have been given felony charges. However, our school followed school policy clearly known by our kids and I assume the police filed charges based on the law.

There must be a clear consequence at all levels so that the kids do fear not only for their health and safety, but also for what will be the end result of their actions.

At this time I would be happy to answer any questions you have for me, to the best of my ability.

Respectfully submitted,

Bobby L. Barnes