

Committee on Energy and Commerce
Opening Statement as Prepared for Delivery
of
Ranking Member Frank Pallone, Jr.

Hearing on “Examining Anti-Doping Measures in Advance of the 2024 Olympics”

June 25, 2024

Every four years, the world comes together to watch the best athletes in the world compete for gold at the Olympics. Over the last couple of weeks, American athletes have been competing against each other for the opportunity to represent the United States at the Olympics next month in Paris. I was thrilled to see two New Jersey swimmers, Matt Fallon and Jack Alexy, earn spots on the Olympic swim team at the Olympic trials in Indianapolis last week.

The Olympics only happen every four years, but these dedicated athletes train around the clock – day in and day out – for the opportunity to compete. They should be assured that the world competition is fair.

I want to thank the witnesses who, by being here today, demonstrate their ongoing commitment to drug-free competitive sports.

Michael Phelps and Allison Schmitt are two of our nation’s top Olympic athletes who have both dedicated most of their lives to rigorous training and incredible discipline to showcase their talents and represent the United States on the world stage. Both of you have made our country proud through your athletic achievements and you continue to make us proud by standing up for clean sport.

The CEO of the US Anti-Doping Agency, Travis Tygart, is also here, representing an institution that works tirelessly to ensure clean competition and the integrity of sport. USADA’s drug-testing and educational programs are held up as examples of the strongest and most effective anti-doping programs in the world. Thank you for your important work and the example that USADA sets.

I must note my extreme disappointment and frustration, however, that the World Anti-Doping Agency declined the Committee’s invitation to testify. WADA is supposed to play a critical role in ensuring that sports are fair, and that competitions are clean across the world. They were established to enforce the rules that keep everyone safe and uphold the integrity of global sporting events. It’s outrageous that WADA does not have the courage or integrity to show up and defend itself here tonight. WADA should be protecting clean sport, not hiding from accountability.

We need answers directly from WADA about the disturbing allegations against Chinese Olympic swimmers. Recently, the world learned of allegations of doping amongst Chinese swimmers in early 2021, seven months before the Tokyo Olympics. It was especially alarming

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to learn of WADA's role in sweeping these positive tests under the rug and allowing the Chinese Anti-Doping Agency to ignore the rules by not making the violations public and failing to issue proper sanctions on the affected athletes.

Thirteen of those swimmers that tested positive for banned substances competed in Tokyo and won several medals. Not only were there no repercussions for violations of the doping rules at the time, but 11 of these swimmers are on the national team for China and will compete again in Paris next month.

WADA's mission is to police doping in the international sports arena. The positive tests from the Chinese swimmers raise serious concerns about WADA's effectiveness in this role. To ensure the integrity of international competition, WADA must send an unambiguous message that it will enforce the rules established in the World Anti-Doping Code and apply all sanctions equally for any violation.

We need a full, clear, and truly independent examination of what happened in the case of these swimmers and equally important, a thorough assessment of WADA's actions and inactions. I'm aware that WADA has commissioned an investigation which is ongoing and is expected to conclude before the end of this month.

WADA should commit to making the results of this investigation public and answering our questions. The international sports community deserves to know what the investigation found and to assess whether the probe was truly independent.

All athletes deserve a cop on the beat that will enforce the rules without fear or favor and ensure the integrity of a competition is not questioned.

I look forward to learning what action is needed to ensure the strong and fair international enforcement of our anti-doping rules. An assessment of the appropriateness of WADA's actions must occur to determine what went wrong and how to prevent it from happening again.

Thank you to all the witnesses who did show up today to help ensure a level playing field for all athletes and to maintain the integrity of international sports at the highest levels.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back