



**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

Statement for the Record  
Congressman Bill Pascrell

U.S. House of Representatives Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Health Hearing:  
“Examining Public Health Legislation to Help Local Communities”  
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Chairman Pitts and Ranking Member Pallone, thank you for holding this hearing on these important public health bills. I am especially grateful that the Subcommittee will again examine the issue of traumatic brain injury and a bill I introduced, the Traumatic Brain Injury Reauthorization Act of 2013.

As the Co-Chair and founder of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force, I have long advocated on behalf of both the civilian and military populations who struggle with the problem of brain injury. Since its founding in 2001, the Task Force’s mission has been to expand the understanding and public awareness of brain injury. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), each year an estimated 1.7 million people sustain a traumatic brain injury (TBI). Unfortunately, TBI is a contributing factor to a third (30.5%) of all injury-related deaths in the United States. Beyond these numbers, TBI has become the “signature wound” of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, with 20% soldiers deployed are estimated to have experienced a brain injury. The brain injuries of our soldiers have spurred Congress to make unprecedented investments in brain injury research—research that will benefit soldiers and civilians alike for years to come.

As many of us here today know, TBI does not discriminate; it truly impacts all sectors of the population. Recent media reports have highlighted its impact on athletes, our service members and even a Member of this chamber, with former Congresswoman Gabrielle Giffords suffering a TBI in 2011 in the wake of a tragic shooting. Both the prevalence and complexity of these injuries call for more research.

The federal government must help address lagging public awareness of brain injury and its consequences and the relative lack of scientific knowledge we have about this ubiquitous injury. In Congress, we have been working tirelessly to correct both of these deficits. The Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) Act, last reauthorized in 2008 and once again up for renewal this year, is the only federal law that specifically addresses the issues faced by the TBI community. The continuation of this program takes important steps forward in ensuring proper collaboration between civilian brain injury efforts and the work being done by the Department of Defense and the Veterans Administration. For example, the Traumatic Brain Injury Act established a CDC/NIH study, in collaboration with the DOD and VA, to identify the best methods of coordinating prevalence data, in order to ensure that national research takes into account the incidence of brain injuries among our nation’s veterans and that current information about diagnosis and treatment are shared between the civilian and military scientific communities.

The TBI Act is an important tool providing for collaboration in the TBI research community, and care for those individuals who have suffered a TBI. The TBI Act currently authorizes:

- the Health Resources and Services Administration (HRSA) to assist States in developing and expanding service delivery capacity for individuals with traumatic brain injury and their families,
- HRSA to make grants for the Protection and Advocacy for Traumatic Brain Injury (PATBI) program, which provides critical advocacy services to ensure that people with TBIs live full and independent lives free from abuse and neglect,
- the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to conduct surveillance, prevention and public education programs, and,
- the National Institutes of Health (NIH) to conduct of basic and applied research in TBI.

I hope that as we continue to discuss the impact of TBI in the community, that the Congress will prioritize the reauthorization of this critically important legislation. In the last few years, we have learned more about the brain than we have over the last century. This knowledge should be applied to protect our fellow Americans. It is important to remember that these wounds may be invisible many times, but the consequences are very real.

Thank you.



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Member of Congress