

## **Drew Blasko – Opening Statement**

Good morning members of Congress and of the Task Force. My name is Drew Blasko. I am a Patrol Officer with the Butler Township Police Department and an Assistant Team Leader of the Sniper Unit within the Butler Township Emergency Services Unit. I am a veteran of the U.S. Army.

Please let me begin by stating that the place where the deadly events of July 13 unfolded is my home. I was born and raised in Butler Township, Pennsylvania. I have regularly attended the annual farm show on those very grounds since I was a child; the lone exception being my time in deployment overseas. The Butler Township community is sacred to me and to the members of the police community with whom I serve.

Many of our families and friends work in Butler Township and our police force works very hard day in and day out to ensure their safety and to maintain the peace and safety of all who come to the Township. The events that ultimately played out were horrific, tragic. A man lost his life. His family lost a husband and father. Peoples' lives were changed forever.

I had the unique perspective of wearing two (2) hats for this rally. As an ESU member and assistant team leader for the sniper unit, I took part in some of the planning meetings, which included interaction with the Secret Service. On the day of the event, I worked as a Butler Township Officer assisting with traffic control to ensure that the roads and intersections were clear for the arrival and departure of the motorcade.

I would like you all to know that I, my fellow Township officers and ESU team members are committed to doing all that we can to help prevent similar tragedies from taking place in the future. We have voluntarily participated in numerous interviews with state and federal investigators, including those from this Task Force. We have done so to be transparent and to do what we can to help make political rallies and public events safer, and most importantly to prevent lives from being shattered whenever evil men are determined to pursue evil deeds.

Thank you.