

Prepared Testimony of Timothy Hinchey III
Before the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations
May 23, 2018

Chairman Harper, Ranking Member DeGette, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

In 2010, long before Larry Nassar's prolific sexual abuse of minor gymnasts became known, USA Swimming faced its own reality that children and swimmers were being sexually abused in sport.

First and foremost, USA Swimming acknowledges and deeply regrets the abuse suffered by children, athletes, and other participants in swimming programs. Participation in sport should offer physical, social and emotional benefits, but for some, it has resulted in abuse and trauma that will negatively impact the rest of their lives. That is inexcusable, and like those of you who sit before me, I am deeply committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children to grow, play and compete.

While recognizing that much work remains to be done, as this Subcommittee examines *the Olympic Community's Ability to Protect Athletes from Sexual Abuse*, let me describe steps that USA Swimming has taken.

In 2010, USA Swimming established a comprehensive abuse prevention and response program called Safe Sport. However, USA Swimming's Safe Sport is not a novel program. It is based on six well-established pillars of youth-serving abuse prevention programs, including: (i) Policies & Guidelines; (ii) Screening & Selection; (iii) Training & Education; (iv) Monitoring & Supervision; (v) Recognizing, Responding & Reporting; and (vi) Grassroots Engagement &

Feedback. USA Swimming partnered with the Child Welfare League of America and received guidance from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children in its creation.

In 2010, USA Swimming also hired an Athlete Protection Officer, the first position of its kind in the Olympic movement, and established a national Safe Sport Committee, charged with review of the organization's athlete protection policies, guidelines, educational programs, and reporting and adjudication procedures.

Over the past eight years, the Safe Sport program has evolved:

- USA Swimming's Code of Conduct has been updated numerous times to enhance athlete protection.
- Reporting policies and procedures have been broadened.
- Over ninety individuals have been banned from membership for sexual misconduct and published on USA Swimming's banned list.
- Criminal background checks have been enhanced. Currently, we conduct monthly recurring reports on our 50,000 non-athlete members, resulting in approximately 600,000 annual checks of the adults who have access to children.
- USA Swimming's Safe Sport champions have grown to two full-time staff, four additional support staff, a twelve-member Safe Sport Committee, four national Zone Safe Sport Coordinators, 59 Local Swim Committee Safe Sport Coordinators, and twelve Safe Sport Athlete Fellows, in addition to the organization's Board of Directors.
- Educational initiatives have increased. Athlete Protection Training is required for all non-athlete members and must be renewed every other year, free Safe Sport training is available to parents and athletes, and over 10,000 individuals have received Safe Sport training in in-person workshops or conferences.
- Finally, a victim's assistance fund, *SwimAssist*, was established following the 2014 assessment of USA Swimming's Safe Sport program by the Gundersen National Child Protection Training Center.

However, child sexual abuse still occurs in swimming. The organization can, should and will do more, and I will lead that effort. I am a father of six; three girls and three boys; ages 30 to 11, and I am a swimmer. I swam at the University of California - Irvine and I still participate in a Master's Swimming program. Upon assuming the role of President & CEO of USA Swimming in July 2017, I recognized Safe Sport's significance to the organization, and the opportunity to work with the Subcommittee in this investigation has only intensified my commitment to make protecting children and athletes USA Swimming's top priority. There will be no complacency on my watch.

To that end, we have a number of new initiatives underway and are vetting even more. The Safe Sport recognized club program will enhance athlete protection efforts at the local level. The "Training the Trainers" program will increase the number of advocates spreading the Safe Sport message throughout the organization. And I have and will continue to meet and engage with survivors of abuse to ensure that we hear their voices and learn from their experiences.

In addition to its own efforts, USA Swimming will continue to be a responsible leader, steward and member of the Olympic sport community. USA Swimming embraces its obligations under the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act and already has policies in place which require reporting, prohibit retaliation, and limit one-on-one interactions between adults and children. Further, USA Swimming supports the U.S. Center for Safe Sport and is fully committed to its success. We will provide meaningful engagement and support to it in any way we can.

While we cannot change the past, we will learn from it and do better. Our commitment to preventing child sexual abuse and providing a safe and healthy environment for our athletes is constant and long-lasting.