

**Prepared Testimony of Timothy Hinchey III**  
**Before the United States Senate Committee on Commerce, Science and Transportation**  
**Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety, Insurance and Data Security**

**October 3, 2018**

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

Earlier this year, I testified before the U.S. House Committee on Energy and Commerce Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations regarding *The Olympic Community's Ability to Protect Athletes from Sexual Abuse*. Today, as then, I begin by acknowledging and apologizing for the abuse suffered by children, athletes, and other participants in swimming programs. The organization as a whole, and I personally, deeply regret the experiences of some of our members that included sexual, physical, or emotional misconduct.

On May 23, I testified about the comprehensive abuse prevention and response program that USA Swimming has worked to create and develop since 2010. I have included for your reference a copy of my prepared testimony to the House of Representatives. Today, I would like to describe the efforts that USA Swimming has made over the past five months to highlight our continued commitment to providing safe and healthy environments to our swimmers and other members.

From an employment perspective, immediately following my prior testimony, I held an all-staff meeting and reiterated the organization's commitment to athlete protection as its top priority. Anyone uncomfortable with that reality was advised to develop an exit strategy. USA Swimming then hired a Safe Sport Coordinator and Associate Counsel to enhance our operational capabilities. Their respective backgrounds include serving as a Sexual Assault Response Coordinator in the United States Army and a Deputy Prosecuting Attorney in the special victim's team sex crimes and child abuse unit, and their skill sets complement the other members of the Safe Sport staff, which now totals eight—four core and four support. These staff members work with countless other Safe Sport Champions, including a twelve-member Safe Sport Committee, four national Zone Safe Sport Coordinators, 59 Local Swim Committee Safe Sport Coordinators, twelve Safe Sport Athlete Fellows, hundreds of Safe Sport Club Coordinators, and the organization's Board of Directors to foster a culture of athlete protection throughout the organization.

Last week, USA Swimming participated in the U.S. Aquatics Sports Convention—a gathering of aquatics National Governing Bodies. I have included for your reference my 2018 State of the Sport report, which was distributed to all Convention attendees and published on USA Swimming's website.

The Convention began with a USA Swimming Board of Directors meeting where the Board voted to designate \$1.5 million dollars of reserves to fund *SwimAssist* costs that may exceed the operating budget. Established in 2014, *SwimAssist* is USA Swimming's victim assistance fund, and this approval will ensure that resources are available to meet the needs of those who suffered abuse in connection with their participation in swimming.

I also attended a Safe Sport Committee meeting, where a group of dedicated volunteers, representing all facets of the organization, addressed various ways to enhance the organization's athlete protection efforts. They discussed, among others, the development of USA Swimming's Training the Trainers program, athlete-to-coach transition resources, communications strategies, and case trends. Immediately following the Committee meeting, USA Swimming Safe Sport staff previewed its new Club Recognition Program, which incentivizes member clubs to exceed the organization's Safe Sport minimum requirements by promoting additional athlete protection education, policies, and best practices.

Also at the Convention, the One Love Foundation offered two in-person training opportunities on healthy and unhealthy behaviors within power-based and peer relationships, after previously co-hosting a webinar with USA Swimming. According to its website, "One Love is the national leader in educating young people about healthy and unhealthy relationships and galvanizing them as leaders of change."

USA Swimming recognizes the tremendous value in partnering with other organizations that are experts and leaders in this space and that can add a voice and perspective to what we develop and promote internally.

To that end, USA Swimming has engaged Praesidium to review its Safe Sport educational content and provide feedback. Praesidium is a national leader in preventing sexual abuse within organizations. For over two decades, they have worked with 4,000 youth and vulnerable adult serving organizations and have a wealth of knowledge and experience to share. Moreover, this initiative was undertaken in direct response to feedback we received regarding our educational materials, including by survivors of sexual abuse within the sport. The input several survivors have provided over the past five months has been among the most powerful, compelling and effective I've received, and I will continue to solicit, listen to, and implement it.

We are also in preliminary stages of discussions with one of our largest team management platforms to push Safe Sport content through team websites to team administrators and parents. This is a watershed opportunity for our athlete protection program, whose key audience is swim parents, even though parents are not typically members and therefore more challenging to reach.

Finally, USA Swimming recognizes the value of its own athlete leaders and role models and has worked with a number of its National Team members and alums to create a public service announcement for national television and digital media distribution to take a stand against athlete abuse.

These are some of the bigger initiatives that the organization has undertaken over the past five months, but there is also considerable value in taking the smaller, more routine steps, day-in and day-out.

Such steps have included USA Swimming:

- Working with the U.S. Center for SafeSport to vet all of its Board of Director candidates, Pan Pacific and Junior Pan Pacific Championship coaches, and 2019 medical staff and managers prior to nomination or appointment.
- Strengthening its internal policy regarding independent contractors to ensure that those with direct contact with athletes are subject to a criminal background check and complete Safe Sport training.
- Updating its membership registration form to acknowledge the mandatory reporting requirements of the *Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act*.
- Distributing an all member communication regarding its *SwimAssist* program as an initial step to ensure that this resource is well known and utilized.
- Continuing to meet and engage with survivors and taking preliminary steps to develop a survivor support network for those who are interested.
- And, since May 28, 2018, USA Swimming has trained over 400 individuals—including coaches, athletes, and parents—in in-person workshops offered at member club visits to the Olympic Training Center, Regional Coaches Clinics, and national programs.

USA Swimming sits before you today as one member of the U.S. Olympic sport community. The United States Olympic Committee has indicated that there will be heightened expectations and greater oversight over all National Governing Bodies with respect to abuse prevention and response. We welcome that. The U.S. Center for SafeSport has indicated that National Governing Bodies must adopt the Center's policies and utilize their education and training. We welcome that, too. There is no pride of ownership in athlete protection; USA Swimming will lead in this space, but we will do so humbly, learning from those who are willing and able to teach.

Finally, USA Swimming recognizes that we are a member of a youth serving organizations community broader than just the Olympic Movement, and, as such, we have an obligation to learn from and to share with our peers. Since May 23, 2018, USA Swimming has attended the National Sexual Assault Conference co-hosted by the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Rape and the National Sexual Violence Resource Center. USA Swimming also contributed to programming at the Beyond Sport Summit put on as part of the International Safeguards for Children in Sport. USA Swimming staff serves as a working group lead within the International Safeguards for Children in Sport Initiative, organized through UNICEF. Later this year, USA Swimming will attend the 2018 International Youth Protection Symposium hosted by the Boy Scouts of America; abuse prevention programming related to aquatic facilities conducted during the World Aquatic Health Conference; and the Praesidium Guardian Program. Finally, USA Swimming will host its own Safe Sport Leadership Conference on January 31 – February 1, 2019 and each of you are invited and encouraged to attend.

As we gather to discuss *Protecting U.S. Amateur Athletes: Examining Abuse Prevention Efforts Across the Olympic Movement*, we acknowledge there is no simple solution. Even within one organization, there are different audiences that require different content through different medium and different factual circumstances that require different responses and different outcomes.

It will take Congress, the United States Olympic Committee, the U.S. Center for SafeSport, USA Swimming, and the other forty-nine National Governing Bodies to work together to put a comprehensive framework in place that creates safe environments, prevents abuse, and responds effectively when it occurs. There must be a comprehensive approach because anything else would be inadequate.

And as that collective effort progresses, USA Swimming is committed to the continued development of its own abuse prevention and response program. We have been busy enhancing our athlete protection efforts since I last testified five months ago, and we will stay busy. I have said before, I say today, and I will say forever, providing a safe and healthy environment to our children, athletes and members is my and the organization's top priority.

I look forward to sharing our experiences, learning from our peers, and assisting you in any way we can to prevent abuse, including child sexual abuse, in sport.