Testimony of Mr. Adam Morrison
NBA Player, Charlotte Bobcats

At the Hearing entitled

"The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the Federal Government: A Model Public-Private Partnership Accelerating Research Toward a Cure"

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Before the

Senate Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs

Good morning. It’s an honor to be here today to appear before this committee to tell you about the ways juvenile diabetes has affected my life and the need to fund research so that we can find a cure as soon as possible. First, I want to thank you, Senator Collins, for chairing today’s hearing and for your ongoing leadership in the Senate Diabetes Caucus.

My name is Adam Morrison. Basketball has always been a part of my life. I’ve been “shooting hoops” since I was 13 months old…..it is in my blood. My Dad, John Morrison, coached college basketball in Wyoming, South Dakota, and Montana. Now I am a professional basketball player with the Charlotte Bobcats of the National Basketball Association. I was drafted in 2006 after playing for three years at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington.

I love being on the court. The game takes determination, focus, and discipline. In fact, having diabetes just made me more determined than ever to accomplish my dreams of playing in the NBA.

I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when I was 14 years old. My Mom and Dad knew that something was wrong when I lost 30 pounds in a month. When I was at a basketball camp at Gonzaga during this time, I felt sick, dizzy, and exhausted. I scored 4 points in three days, I couldn't do anything. I was taken to the hospital where I stayed for three days. It was hard at first to understand what was happening to my body, to know that I would be living with diabetes for the rest of my life. When the nurse came in to give me my first shot of insulin, I figured that I needed to step it up. I told the nurse that "Since I'm going to be doing this the rest of my life, you might as well show me how to do it." Diabetes is now simply just a part of who I am, plain and simple.

I was fortunate to be surrounded by people who gave me positive encouragement right from the first day of my diagnosis. My endocrinologist, Dr. Ken Cathcart, came into my room at the hospital and looked me right in the eye…and told me that I was going to be O.K., and that I could do anything I wanted to in life. Having diabetes was not going to stop me from dreaming big dreams.

Then I just went back to playing basketball. I didn’t want to miss any time on the court. In my senior year of high school in Spokane, I broke single-season and career scoring records in my high school conference and led my school to the finals of the state tournament.

Before I went to the NBA, I was lucky to have the opportunity to reach out to other people with diabetes like Chris Dudley, who played for the Portland Trail Blazers. Chris told me that “short of a cure, the one thing that I could wish for was to play one game where I didn’t have to focus on my diabetes.” It’s true.

I test my blood glucose levels everyday, and several times during games. I wonder if it’s too low. It is always on my mind. I have to stay really disciplined to keep it all together when I play basketball. For example, I wait exactly until two hours and 15 minutes before tip off and eat two five-ounce steaks, a vegetable, and a baked potato. It is the same meal before every game so that I can keep my glucose levels as balanced as possible.

When I am not playing basketball, I wear an insulin pump that attaches to a small catheter in my abdomen. And, like all the kids in this room, I have to stick my finger to test my blood glucose level anywhere from 10 to 12 times a day. We all have to calculate the number of carbohydrates we eat, the amount of exercise we get, and the insulin we need to take to keep our blood sugar in a normal range.

I look around this room and I see kids who are at the age that I was when I was diagnosed. It is when my life changed, it seemed like it just happened overnight, and then it changed forever. Our diabetes is with us everyday of our lives. It never goes away. We never get a time out.

I want to be a role model for people with diabetes, and show the 150 kids that are sitting here today, that you can still do what you want to do; you can still be successful and have diabetes. It is a disease that you can’t see, but still you have to be so careful or you will have complications. You have to have determination. You have to continue to dream big dreams but follow your doctor’s advice and stay healthy.

To the Senators in this room, I want to ask you to do everything in your power to help us find a cure by funding the best research that we possibly can have in this country. The insulin that we take is not a cure, but simply a life support. We must continue to strive for a cure. Congress can and must reauthorize and fund the Special Diabetes Program that gives us all hope. We must allow scientists to take full advantage of the research opportunities that currently exist that may lead to new treatments and a cure. Have the determination, focus, and discipline for a win here today. Please fund diabetes research…it is life or death for so many of us.

Thank you for this opportunity to appear before you today.