

## **Brain Injury Awareness Day on Capitol Hill – Virtual Briefing**

**March 3, 2021**

### **Moderator:**

**Brent E. Masel M.D.** is the Executive Vice-President for Medical Affairs with the Centre for Neuroskills and is a Clinical Professor of Neurology at the University of Texas Medical Branch in Galveston. He previously served as the President and Medical Director of the Transitional Learning Center at Galveston from 1994 -2017. Dr. Masel received his Medical Degree from the Loyola University School of Medicine, and completed his post-graduate training from the University of Texas Medical Branch. He is a Board Certified Neurologist and was in the private practice of Neurology for 16 years.

He has conducted research and has over 40 publications in the areas of brain injury rehabilitation including virtual reality, hyperbaric oxygen treatment, sleep abnormalities, metabolic abnormalities, hormonal dysfunction, and the long term medical issues from chronic brain injury. Dr. Masel is a Board member of the North American Brain Injury Society, and the Brain Injury Association of America, where he serves as the National Medical Director. He is the recipient of the Lifetime Achievement Award from the Brain Injury Association of Texas, the Innovations in Clinical Treatment Award from the North American Brain Injury Society and is the recipient of the 2013 Sheldon Berrol Clinical Services Award from the Brain Injury Association of America. His greatest achievement is his two sons who are both physicians.

### **Panelists:**

**Cong. Bill Pascrell, Jr.** is the co-chair and founder of the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force (CBITF). He was first elected Congressman for New Jersey's 8th Congressional District in 1996 and is now in his twelfth term, currently representing New Jersey's 9th congressional district. As the co-chair of the CBITF, he has raised the nation's awareness of the dangers of traumatic brain injury (TBI). He sponsored the TBI Program Reauthorization Act of 2018, as well as prior reauthorization bills. This year he is reintroducing the "Traumatic Brain Injury and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder Law Enforcement Training Act."

Cong. Pascrell has worked to make sure that our soldiers are properly screened and diagnosed for concussions. He continues to fight for TRICARE insurance coverage to pay for cognitive rehabilitation therapy – the most effective treatment for soldiers recovering from TBI. After the tragic death of Montclair High School football player Ryne Dougherty in 2008, his efforts against the dangers of TBI have expanded to help protect young athletes. On Sept. 30, 2010, the U.S. House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed Cong. Pascrell's Concussion Treatment and Care Tools (ConTACT) Act. The legislation calls for the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to develop guidelines and protocols for the management and treatment of sports-related concussions for the benefit of the nation's student-athletes.

He is also a nationally recognized leader in Congress on the issue of fire safety, having proudly authored the F.I.R.E. (Firefighter Investment and Response Enhancement) Act, which became law in 2001. The law established the only federal program that delivers grant dollars directly to fire departments. The program, now titled the Assistance to Firefighters Grant (AFG) Program, is administered by the Department of Homeland Security. Now, the nation's 32,000 career, volunteer and combination fire departments can apply for federal grants to purchase the equipment, training, and vehicles needed to serve their communities. The AFG program also funds Fire Prevention and Safety Grants, for fire awareness and prevention activities, as well as fire safety-related research. He also conceived of the SAFER (Staffing for Adequate Fire and Emergency Response) grant program which provides federal support for staffing of local fire departments.

Cong. Pascrell served his country in the U.S. Army and the U.S. Army Reserve and received an honorable discharge in 1967. His political life began in 1987 when he was elected to the New Jersey General Assembly, where he eventually became Minority Leader Pro Tempore. In 1990, Bill was elected mayor of Paterson, New Jersey's third largest city. Bill's efforts, both as a Mayor and Assemblyman, were recognized in 1996 as he was named New Jersey's "Mayor of the Year" by his fellow Mayors, and "Legislator of the Year" by the New Jersey Chamber of Commerce.

Cong. Pascrell is married to the former Elsie Marie Botto and they have three children, William III, Glenn Martin, and David Joseph. They are also the proud grandparents of five grandchildren.

**Rep. Don Bacon** co-chairs the Congressional Brain Injury Task Force and represents Nebraska's 2nd Congressional District. He is serving his second term. He has a prior military career having served 30 years in the U.S. Air Force, ultimately retiring as a Brigadier General. He presently serves on the House Armed Services Committee, as well as the House Agriculture Committee, and has demonstrated strong support for assistance for those who have served in the military and who have sustained a brain injury.

Growing up and working on a farm in Illinois, Congressman Don Bacon learned first-hand how the value of hard work and commitment contributes to the success of a small business. He moved from the family farm to attend Northern Illinois University, from which he graduated with a Bachelors of Political Science in 1984, the same year he married Angie, the love of his life. They have three sons, one daughter, and six grandchildren. One year later, he began his military career by joining the U.S. Air Force.

During his career in the Air Force, Congressman Bacon specialized in electronic warfare, intelligence and reconnaissance. His career highlights include two tours as a Wing Commander, at Ramstein Airbase in Germany and Offutt Air Force Base in Bellevue, Nebraska; group command at Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona; squadron command in Arizona, and expeditionary squadron command in Iraq. In total, Congressman Bacon served 16 assignments including four deployments across the globe, three of which were in the Middle East, and one assignment to Iraq in 2007 to 2008 during Operation IRAQI FREEDOM.

Congressman Bacon's military decorations include the Air Force Distinguished Service Medal, two Bronze Stars, two Legion of Merits, five Meritorious Service Medals, and the Aerial Achievement Medal. Additionally, he was selected as Europe's top Air Force Wing Commander for his time at Ramstein Airbase, as well as recognized as a distinguished graduate of the Air Command and Staff College, Navigator-Electronic Warfare School, and Officer Intelligence School. Further, Congressman Bacon has earned two Masters Degrees, from the University of Phoenix in Arizona and the National War College in Washington D.C.

Upon his retirement from the Air Force in 2014, Congressman Bacon served as the military advisor to [Congressman Jeff Fortenberry](#) (NE-01), where he specialized in military affairs focusing on Offutt Air Force Base and the Nebraska National Guard. He also was an Assistant Professor at Bellevue University where he taught Undergraduate Leadership along with American Vision and Values (The Kirkpatrick Signature Series), until his 2016 election to Congress, representing Nebraska's Second Congressional District.

**Michael J. Hall, Ph.D.**, is a staff neuropsychologist at the Iowa City VA Health Care System, an adjunct associate professor in the Department of Psychiatry at the University of Iowa and currently serves as the Chair of the Governor's Advisory Council on Brain Injuries for the State of Iowa. He completed his masters and doctoral degrees at Kent State University, his internship at the University of Massachusetts Medical School, and a clinical fellowship in neuropsychology at Harvard Medical School. Dr. Hall splits time between clinical work, teaching, research and program development. His research focus has included traumatic brain injury and co-occurring problems in Veterans. Following the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Dr. Hall has clinically worked with COVID-19 survivors with lasting cognitive problems and has been involved in region and national presentations on the neurologic effects of COVID-19.

**Jennifer Braun** is the Brain Injury Manager for the Bureau of Special Health Care Needs within the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services. Jennifer is been responsible for providing development, implementation, day-to-day management, monitoring and continuous improvement of all Adult Brain Injury Program components in order to assure appropriate services for persons with brain injuries are delivered and received. She also serves as the Project Director for the Administration for Community Living (ACL) Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) State Partnership Grant. In addition, she is responsible for facilitating the functions of the Missouri Brain Injury Advisory Council, a state-wide Governor appointed council that studies and promotes interventions and systems that improve outcomes related to traumatic brain injury. Jennifer sits on the National Association of State Head Injury Administrators (NASHIA) Board of Directors and serves as the Treasurer and Chair of the Public Policy Committee.

**Eric Washington**, from Detroit, Michigan. I'm a former football player for the University of Minnesota and the University of Kansas. My football career ended September 30th, 2006 against the University of Nebraska due to a concussion and spinal cord injury. After recovering from the neck injury, I returned to graduate with my bachelor's degree in Applied Behavioral

Sciences working with adults with developmental disabilities. After years of recovering mentally and physically I decided to devote my life to helping people that suffer from a TBI or helping the homeless population find resources in the community.

**Matt Breiding, Ph.D.**, is a behavioral scientist and serves as team lead of the Traumatic Brain Injury Team in the Division of Injury Prevention (DIP) at CDC's Injury Center. His work at CDC has been focused on surveillance of traumatic brain injury, intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and child abuse—both domestic and international.

He began his career at CDC as an Epidemic Intelligence Service (EIS) officer, assigned to CDC's Division of Violence Prevention. Upon completion of his two-year EIS fellowship he remained with the Division of Violence Prevention, serving as a behavioral scientist.

Dr. Breiding received a bachelor of science degree in industrial and systems engineering from Ohio State University and masters and doctoral degrees in counseling psychology from the University of Notre Dame. He completed a post-doctoral clinical residency at the Washington University in St. Louis Student Health and Counseling Center. He is a licensed psychologist in the state of Missouri.

He has coauthored more than 50 peer-reviewed publications, government reports, and book chapters, and has received a number of awards for his work in public health.