

Testimony of Kate Hall

From Casco, Maine

At the Hearing entitled:

“Diabetes Research: Improving Lives on the Path to a Cure”

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Before the

United States Senate Special Committee on Aging

Dirksen Senate Office Building, Room G-50

Washington, D.C.

Good afternoon. My name is Kate Hall and I am from Casco, Maine. Thank you, Chairman Collins, Ranking Member McCaskill and Members of the Committee, for the honor of being here today to speak about my experience living with type 1 diabetes or T1D as an athlete.

I was diagnosed with type 1 diabetes when I was ten years old. At first it seemed as if I would never understand every little, tiny detail that was involved in having diabetes. I had to adjust to taking shots of insulin, checking my blood sugar several times a day, learning how to count carbohydrates in everything I ate, and learning how to deal with high and low blood sugars correctly. However, the thing that stood out to me the most was being benched during my first soccer game after my diagnosis. That really made me realize that diabetes wasn't going to ever stop me from doing the things I loved most. I thought, "I am not sitting out on anything ever again if I can help it. I am figuring this thing out."

Type 1 diabetes is challenging, particularly when it comes to what I love doing most – track and field. The events I compete in, the long jump and the short sprints, require rigorous, daily training. But for me, because I live with T1D, keeping my blood sugar in a healthy range as much as possible is just as important a part of my training and success as anything else I can do to prepare for competitions. Managing my diabetes can be really hard at times, and I've realized I can't figure everything out on my own. I need help from doctors, my parents, diabetes technologies, and researchers.

Being a competitive track and field athlete, there are many tiny details involved that people have to do in order to get the best results possible. Some of these things include staying hydrated, eating well, sleeping well, training the right way, and warming up correctly to prevent injury. Not only do I have to do all of these things, but making sure my blood sugar is at a good level is another thing to add to the list. Whenever I am training or competing I have to take my blood sugar several times before I run in order to make sure it won't go high or low. If it is high or low, I need to quickly do what I need to do to get it to that perfect level so it doesn't negatively affect me. During my training or competition, I try to check my blood sugar every half hour to ensure a high or low blood sugar will not affect my performances. If my blood sugars do become too high or low, which has happened several times, my PH level changes and I occasionally get muscle cramps. These muscles cramps are very painful and prevent me from competing the rest of the day or even week. When this happens, it is extremely frustrating to think that my diabetes is preventing me from doing what I love the most even when I try my hardest to control it.

I wear an insulin pump and was using a continuous glucose monitor until we changed health insurance companies. With most private health insurers covering CGMs these days, I am hopeful that my current plan will update its policy so I can use a CGM again. These devices help me spend more of my day in a healthy blood sugar range, and also help me focus on training and competing.

Thankfully, new technology, diabetes management devices, and also the support of my family and my healthcare team, have allowed me to pursue my passion and become a world-ranked junior athlete. I was able to end my high school long jump career this year by breaking a 39-year old national high school record with a jump of 22 feet, 5 inches at the New Balance Nationals last month. My jump also broke the U.S. junior record set in 1982 and surpassed the automatic qualifying standard for the 2016 Olympic trials. I also finished third in the 100 meter event with a time of 11.37 seconds.

My dream is to one day represent the United States at the Olympics. This fall, I'll begin training at Iowa State, and although I'll be far from home and working with a new team of coaches – one key part of my life remains unchanged: the challenges of managing my type 1 diabetes every day.

Technologies are important, but those of us with T1D need more. We need the scientists to help us figure out even better treatments and a cure for this disease. That's why my family and I are grateful for the funding that Congress has provided for type 1 diabetes research. Chairman Collins, we thank you for your leadership. All of us with T1D are counting on Congress to help us figure it out.

Thank you.