

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, My name is Tim Arnold and I am honored to appear before you today to share my story and advocate for the present testimony on HB434, The Traumatic Brain Injury Treatment Accelerator Pilot Program (TBITXL)

On September 11, 2001, I don't need to tell you that our nation experienced one of the darkest days in its history. I watched the events of that day unfold like so many others. I was overcome with a sense of shock, disbelief, sadness and rage. In the aftermath of the attacks, I was left grappling with a profound sense of purpose and a desire to make a difference. For me, joining the military was not just about fighting an enemy abroad; it was about standing up for what is right, protecting the innocent, and ensuring that the sacrifices made on 9/11 would never be forgotten.

I obtained the rank of Staff Sergeant in the United States Marine Corps, serving from 2002 to 2011. I embarked on a decade-long journey of service, completing six combat tours in Iraq and Africa. Throughout my service, I earned multiple combat awards and distinctions, including the Purple Heart.

During my fourth deployment to Husaybah, Iraq, I confronted the brutal realities of war firsthand. Serving as the squad leader stationed at Camp Gannon, I led a team of 12 squad members along with attachments tasked with intercepting supply routes between Iraq and Syria and maintaining a foothold inside the city. On April 11th 2005, at 0803 hours, while concluding my duty as Sergeant of the guard, going 12-hour shift atop the houses we held, I dropped my helmet, opened my flak jacket and began to untie my boot to get some sleep. Suddenly, we were rocked by what I believed to be a rocket or mortar attack. Concussion #1. I made it to the roof top, expecting my guys to be in pieces, only to find them heavily engaged in a firefight. Moments later, we spotted a BOLO ambulance, we shift fire, they explode. I say "they" because they were close enough that we could see them, their determination, and our bulletproof glass. Concussion #2 and unconscious again. We gain access to the building roof again and get back in the fight. 0838 the 3rd and final car bomb is spotted and closing in on us is a dump truck, laden with explosives. A mushroom cloud seen 13 miles away at the other base. The explosion carved a deep, ten-foot crater in the ground, hurling us off the rooftop. Regaining consciousness three minutes later, we are disoriented on the opposite side of the building, adrenaline running. We ascended to what was left of the rooftop to assess the situation. My guys were still involved in a fire fight less than 50 yards away, we were starting to run low on ammo, we were hurt, but we were still at work.

Forty-five minutes into the intense battle, our resolve was bolstered as two F18s, two Cobra helicopters, and one Huey was called in to clear the battlefield. However, the toll of the confrontation was evident as myself and two comrades were being medevac'd from the blasts, gunshots and shockwaves, to Balad Air Base for medical treatment.

Despite regaining consciousness, the lasting repercussions of the injury endured,

resulting in severe migraine headaches that continue to affect me, the hearing aids at age 30, the tinnitus and various other health problems. This personal struggle serves as a reminder of the sacrifices made by those who defend our freedoms. When our Marines courageously take up arms to protect our liberties, they do so with the awareness that they may encounter grave dangers on the battlefield. Yet, it is the aftermath of war, the invisible scars, such as the post blast syndrome and grey matter spot on my brain, that haunt us long after the physical battle stops, which demand our urgent attention. Traumatic brain injuries, such as the one I endured, are a sobering reality for many veterans, yet treatment options remain limited. Therefore, I ask the legislature for its initiative in implementing a program dedicated to developing drugs specifically tailored to address traumatic brain injuries in crisis situations.

By prioritizing initiatives aimed at alleviating the burdens of these injuries, we not only honor the sacrifices of our injured heroes but also demonstrate our unwavering commitment to their well-being. With decisive action, we can ensure that those who have bravely served our country receive the support and care they deserve.

Chairman Edwards, Vice Chair LaRe, Ranking Member Sweeney, and members of the House Finance Committee, thank you for your attention to this critical issue, and may we continue to stand united in our efforts to combat traumatic brain injuries, safeguarding the health and dignity of our veterans and service members. I can answer any questions the committee has at this time.