

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 4, 2014

Roger Goodell
Commissioner
National Football League
1201 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., Suite 645
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Commissioner Goodell,

We remain deeply concerned by the National Football League's (NFL) lack of aggressiveness in implementing consistent disciplinary policies regarding domestic violence and sexual assault by league and team employees. We appreciate Mr. Vincent's testimony before the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation on December 2nd, 2014, but his and his fellow witnesses' words must be matched with action. We encourage you to hold the NFL to the commitments that Mr. Vincent made and proactively address the concerns raised at the hearing. You should consider using all tools at your disposal to hold team owners accountable for promoting cultures that either explicitly or tacitly excuses domestic violence and sexual assault, including penalizing teams by taking away draft picks.

As you continue the process of reevaluating and improving your disciplinary policies related to cases of domestic abuse and sexual assault we urge you to create accountability at all levels of the NFL, particularly among team owners, who have the most direct financial incentives to avoid long-term suspensions and quickly get players back on the field.

At the December 2nd hearing, Mr. Vincent noted that an NFL owners' meeting in the coming weeks will begin to consider systems of accountability for team owners, staff, and even local law enforcement who work for teams when off duty. One possible penalty that Mr. Vincent mentioned was the removal of draft picks for teams that do not proactively move to both prevent and punish domestic violence and sexual assaults committed by their employees. The NFL also committed to providing critical funding to domestic violence support groups that have been flooded with requests for help in the wake of the Ray Rice video. We hope you will keep that option and other points of leverage on the table to drive home the point to team owners that the NFL is serious about accountability.

As you work to remove incentives that discourage the reporting of assaults and encourage lax punishment, we also urge you to work diligently to change the culture of your league and your teams from the board room to the locker room. In an industry that actively styles itself as far more than a business, one that seeks to create and promote role models for youth, there can be zero tolerance for misogyny or violence. Indeed, there must be a proactive effort to implement a culture of active opposition to these societal scourges, and to communicate that message both to those within the NFL and to its audience.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Schatz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping tail that loops back under the name.

Brian Schatz
United States Senator

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is cursive and somewhat stylized, with a prominent initial "R" and a long, sweeping tail.

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator