

## United States Senate

October 7, 2021

COMMITTEES:  
ARMED SERVICES  
COMMERCE, SCIENCE, AND  
TRANSPORTATION  
JUDICIARY  
VETERANS' AFFAIRS

Ms. Ju'Riese Colón  
U.S. Center for SafeSport  
P.O. Box 460308  
Denver, CO 80246

Dear Ms. Colón,

We write to you to express concern regarding the recent U.S. Senate Committee on the Judiciary hearing on *Dereliction of Duty: Examining the Inspector General's Report on the FBI's Handling of the Larry Nassar Investigation*. Specifically, we are concerned that the U.S. Center for SafeSport may not have the correct tools and resources to fulfill its obligations to protect young athletes in the United States.

After years and years of reported misconduct in youth sports, Congress passed the Protecting Young Victims from Sexual Abuse and Safe Sport Authorization Act of 2017. This bill further authorizes the U.S. Center for Safe Sport to ensure that Olympic athletes can report allegations of abuse to an independent entity for investigation and resolution, and to make sure that all national governing bodies follow the strictest standards for child abuse prevention and detection.<sup>1</sup> This daunting task quickly put the Center for SafeSport on the frontlines of protecting our most innocent and vulnerable youths from evil predators in sports.

Last year, the Empowering Olympic, Paralympic, and Amateur Athletes Act of 2020 was signed into law. This legislation establishes safeguards to protect amateur athletes from abuse, including sexual abuse, by coaches and employees in U.S. Olympic and Paralympic sports.<sup>2</sup> By the end of 2020, the U.S. Center for SafeSport resolved over 2,400 cases, and over 300 cases of abuse were referred by the center to law enforcement. It is clear to us that the center is making important strides in marketing and communicating their policies and guidelines to athletes and National Governing Bodies (NGBs) in sports. While we are pleased to see these improvements, it's unacceptable that certain athletes continue to have major issues with reporting abuse and sexual misconduct to the center.

In the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing on September 15, 2021, victims of Mr. Nassar, including Simone Biles, McKayla Maroney, Maggie Nichols, and Aly Raisman bravely publicly testified on how the USOPC and the FBI neglected their cases against Mr. Nassar. This

---

<sup>1</sup> "Senate Passes Bill Requiring U.S. Amateur Athletic Organizations to Report Sexual Abuse." United States Senator for California, 14 Nov. 2017, <https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/2017/11/senate-passes-bill-requiring-u-s-amateur-athletic-organizations-to-report-sexual-abuse>.

<sup>2</sup> "S.2330 - 116th Congress (2019-2020): Empowering Olympic ..." Congress.Gov, <https://www.congress.gov/bill/116th-congress/senate-bill/2330>.


inexplicable dereliction of duty should never have happened; and under your watch, should never happen again.

In August 2021, the U.S. Center for SafeSport released a detailed, strategic plan on how they plan to fulfill their duties. The report includes five core themes: accountability, sustainability, reach, partnership, and development. We'd specifically like to touch on accountability, reach, and partnership in the questions below:

1. What is your response to the testimonies submitted by the witnesses in the Senate Committee on the Judiciary hearing on September 15, 2021?
2. What have you learned from the witnesses' tragic experiences with USOPC, FBI, and others?
3. How can audits of NGBs, the USOPC, and Paralympic Sport Organizations (PSOs) ensure accountability?
4. Do you believe you are fulfilling your mandate effectively? If not, why?
5. What additional resources do you need to ensure that predators are held accountable and children are protected from abuse?

We appreciate your attention to this important matter. It is paramount for the U.S. Center for SafeSport to ensure young athletes that those who harm them, or try to inflict pain, are held accountable at the highest levels. Additionally, we request briefing on this request within 30-days of receipt of this letter.

Sincerely,



Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator