

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 20, 2021

## VIA ELECTRONIC SUBMISSION

Ms. Susanne Lyons  
Board Chair  
United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee  
The J. Edgar Hoover Building  
27 S Tejon St  
Colorado Springs, CO 80903

Dear Chair Lyons,

We write to express our concerns with the United States Olympic & Paralympic Committee's (USOPC) ability to guarantee the welfare of Team USA at the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

In a December 5, 2019, correspondence to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), I led members of the Senate in highlighting numerous human rights violations unfolding in China. With the Olympics being three months away, it is imperative that the USOPC take action and boycott the Beijing Olympics. The People's Republic of China (PRC) is a country plagued with violent suppression of free speech, state-sponsored oppression, and other human rights abuses. As Communist Chinese Party (CCP) authorities enjoy unchecked power and zero accountability, American athletes could face severe endangerment.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, China's controversial national security law creates harsher sentences against Hong Kong residents who support secession or coordinate with foreign powers. The recent disappearance of tennis player Peng Shuai is an alarming reminder of Beijing's willingness to silence any opposition.

The CCP has a vile history of violating human rights and religious freedom. These concerns are especially pronounced given the use of new and emerging technologies to suppress groups including Uyghurs, Tibetans, Inner Mongolians, and Hongkongers.<sup>2</sup> The Department of State annual Report on Human Rights Practices identified a peak in human rights abuses around the 2008 Olympic Games.<sup>3</sup> This report documents numerous violations, including: forced relocations linked to Olympic infrastructure construction; mandatory travel abroad or house arrest for political prisoners during the Games; increased surveillance of civil society organizations and suspension of meetings and activities by NGOs; increased harassment of religious groups, including prominent Christian activists; directives to schools and universities

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<sup>1</sup> Alexandra Stevenson and Steven Lee Myers. "China Can't Censor Away Growing Anger Over Athlete's #MeToo Accusation." The New York Times. November 17, 2021. <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/17/world/asia/peng-shuai-zhang-gaoli-china-tennis.html>.

<sup>2</sup> Jing Yang. "WeChat Becomes a Powerful Surveillance Tool Everywhere in China." Wall Street Journal. December 22, 2020. <https://www.wsj.com/articles/wechat-becomes-a-powerful-surveillance-tool-everywhere-in-china-11608633003>.

<sup>3</sup> 2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – China (Includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau). U.S. Department of State. February 25, 2009.

regarding guardrails for political and social discourse leading up to and during the Olympics; heightened harassment, detention, and incarceration of dissidents; restrictions on the right to assemble and raise grievances; and other abuses.<sup>4</sup> There is no indication that the CCP will not repeat these abuses in February.

Since our 1896 debut in Athens, Team USA has produced some of the greatest athletes the world has ever seen. The USA is currently ranked number one for the most Olympic medal won of all time. In addition, our athletes have won the most overall medals for seven consecutive Olympics.<sup>5</sup> The IOC's Olympic Charter holds that, "The goal of Olympism is to place sport at the service of the harmonious development of humankind." With this in mind, we ask the USOPC refrain from sending American athletes to the 2022 Beijing Winter Olympics.

Sincerely,



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Marsh Blackburn  
United States Senator



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Tom Cotton  
United States Senator

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<sup>4</sup> 2008 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – China (Includes Tibet, Hong Kong, and Macau). U.S. Department of State. February 25, 2009.

<sup>5</sup> Nate Stuhlbarg. "USA edges China, takes home most gold medals from Tokyo Olympics." August 8, 2021. <https://www.nbcolympics.com/news/usa-edges-china-takes-home-most-gold-medals-tokyo-olympics>.