

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS  
**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE  
2125 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING  
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6115  
Majority (202) 225-2927  
Minority (202) 225-3641

March 5, 2019

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Chairman  
Committee on Energy and Commerce  
2125 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Diana DeGette  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Oversight  
and Investigations  
2111 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Janice D. Schakowsky  
Chairwoman  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection  
and Commerce  
2367 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20505

Dear Chairman Pallone, Chair DeGette, and Chairwoman Schakowsky:

We are writing to request that you hold hearings to continue the Committee's oversight of sexual abuse within the U.S. Olympic Committee (USOC) and the 48 National Governing Bodies (NGB). On December 20, 2018, we issued an extensive Republican staff report entitled "Nassar and Beyond: A Review of the Olympic Community's Efforts to Protect Athletes from Sexual Abuse" detailing the findings of the Committee's bipartisan investigation.<sup>1</sup> The report also made a series of recommendations, many of which the USOC and NGBs have begun to act upon.

The Committee's investigation began more than one year ago when we sent five bipartisan letters on January 26, 2018, to the USOC, USA Gymnastics (USAG), USA Swimming, USA Taekwondo, and Michigan State University (MSU).<sup>2</sup> The responses to the

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<sup>1</sup> H. Comm. on Energy and Commerce report, "*Nassar and Beyond: A Review of the Olympic Community's Efforts to Protect Athletes from Sexual Abuse*" (Dec. 20, 2018), available at <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/EC-USOC-Report-12.20.18-Final-REV.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Letters from Hon. Greg Walden, Chairman, H. Comm. on Energy and Commerce, et al., to Ms. Kerry Perry (USAG), Mr. Scott Blackmun (USOC), Mr. Brian Breslin (MSU), Mr. Tim Hinchey (USAS), and Mr. Steve McNally (USAT) (Jan 26, 2018), available at <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/news/letter/letters->

Committee's letters, along with media reports and information provided to the Committee by survivors and whistleblowers, raised concerns about a potentially systemic problem within the U.S. Olympic community and its ability to protect adequately its athletes from sexual abuse and mistreatment. This led us to expand our probe by sending bipartisan letters to the USOC, the 48 National Governing Bodies (NGB), and MSU with a series of detailed questions and document requests.<sup>3</sup> In response, the Committee received nearly 152,000 pages of documents and extensive narrative responses.

On May 23, 2018, the Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations held a hearing entitled, "Examining the U.S. Olympic Community's Ability to Protect Athletes from Sexual Abuse."<sup>4</sup> The purpose of the hearing was to examine the pervasiveness of sexual misconduct within the U.S. Olympic community, including whether there are adequate policies and procedures in place to protect athletes at all levels of sport, how to handle cases of sexual misconduct properly and effectively, how the U.S. Olympic community can learn from the past and examine opportunities to reform the system, and how to ensure better oversight, accountability, and restore public and athlete confidence within the U.S. Olympic community.

During the bipartisan investigation, the Committee uncovered numerous failures and trends within the U.S. Olympic community that contributed to widespread instances of sexual abuse. The Republican staff report summarizes our findings and puts forth several recommendations aimed at not only improving athlete safety but also putting athlete safety at the center of the USOC and NGBs' mission.<sup>5</sup>

The USOC's current CEO, Ms. Sarah Hirshland, issued a statement after the Committee released its report thanking the Committee "for conducting this important review and for the constructive recommendations [the Committee] provided."<sup>6</sup> The statement continued that "[w]hile [the USOC] only just begun to digest the recommendations, this report adds another significant source of information to ensure [the USOC] understand areas in which the Olympic

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usa-gymnastics-u-s-olympics-committee-michigan-state-university-usa-swimming-usa-taekwondo-regarding-sexual-abuse-organized-sports/.

<sup>3</sup> Letters from Hon. Greg Walden, Chairman, H. Comm. on Energy and Commerce, et al., to Ms. Susanne Lyons (USOC), Mr. John Engler (MSU), Mr. Rod Menzer (USAA), et al., (Mar. 7, 2018), available at <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/news/letter/letters-u-s-olympic-committee-48-national-governing-bodies-michigan-state-university-sexual-abuse-organized-sports/>.

<sup>4</sup> H. Comm. on Energy and Commerce hearing, "Examining the U.S. Olympic Community's Ability to Protect Athletes from Sexual Abuse" (May 23, 2018), available at <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/hearings/examining-the-olympic-communitys-ability-to-protect-athletes-from-sexual-abuse/>.

<sup>5</sup> H. Comm. on Energy and Commerce report, "Nassar and Beyond: A Review of the Olympic Community's Efforts to Protect Athletes from Sexual Abuse" (Dec. 20, 2018), available at <https://republicans-energycommerce.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/EC-USOC-Report-12.20.18-Final-REV.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> Team USA, *USOC Statement On The House Energy And Commerce Committee's Report*, (Dec. 20, 2018), available at <https://www.teamusa.org/News/2018/December/20/USOC-Statement-On-The-House-Energy-And-Commerce-Committees-Report>.

community failed athletes and meaningful actions [the USOC] can take to ensure that athlete safety is [the USOC's] number one priority.”<sup>7</sup>

We appreciate the USOC's statement, and we have been encouraged by the early adoption of some of the Committee's recommendations to protect athlete safety. For example, since the Committee started its investigation, the USOC has removed the reference to “reputation” from its Athlete Safety Policy and some NGBs have made their banned or suspended list public. In addition to the changes that were made since the start of the Committee's investigation, since the Committee released its report on December 20, 2018, the USOC published a document outlining actions to date as of January 16, 2019.<sup>8</sup> Examples of the reforms include:

- **“The USOC is supporting the Center's effort to create a comprehensive information resource on banned and suspended individuals** across the USOC, NGBs and the Center. That database will be active in the first quarter of 2019.”<sup>9</sup>
- **“In the first quarter of 2019, the USOC will begin implementing a new background check policy that outlines minimum standards** for all member NGBs, Paralympic Sport Organizations and High-Performance Management Organizations to adopt as part of their background check requirements. The new policy identifies background check search components, inclusion of who is required to complete a background check, and offenses that may disqualify an individual from affiliation and/or participation in the U.S. Olympic and Paralympic movements.”<sup>10</sup>
- **“The USOC is working with its Athletes' Advisory Council to review athlete representation on the USOC board.”**<sup>11</sup>
- **“To ensure NGBs comply with conditions of USOC membership, the USOC conducts annual compliance reviews and is increasing the frequency of audits. The USOC expanded its audit and compliance division – and scope – in 2018 and began publishing NGB compliance reports to ensure increased transparency. In 2019, compliance reports for all 50 NGBs will be available publicly on TeamUSA.org.”**<sup>12</sup>

These are just a few of the examples of the reforms that the USOC has started taking. Challenges to the USOC community remain, however, and given the importance of protecting athlete safety, we strongly believe it is important for the Committee to continue to monitor

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<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> Team USA, *Actions Taken: Commitment to a Safer U.S. Olympic & Paralympic Community* (Jan. 2019), available at <https://www.teamusa.org/Home/Team%20USA%20Athlete%20Services/Safe%20Sport> (last accessed on Feb. 15, 2018).

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

The Honorable Frank Pallone, Jr.  
The Honorable Diana DeGette  
The Honorable Janice D. Schakowsky  
Page 4

closely the changes that are made within the U.S. Olympic community, including by the USOC, the NGBs, and the U.S. Center for SafeSport, to address our recommendations. It is also important that the Committee consider whether legislative updates should be made to the Ted Stevens Act to ensure athlete safety, another of the report's recommendations. We therefore ask that you hold hearings to ensure the recommendations contained in the report are being considered throughout the U.S. Olympic community. As you know, it is critical that the USOC and NGBs put athlete safety at the center of their missions, and hearings on this topic will allow us to continue examining whether the U.S. Olympic community is taking the appropriate steps to improve the protection of athlete safety.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

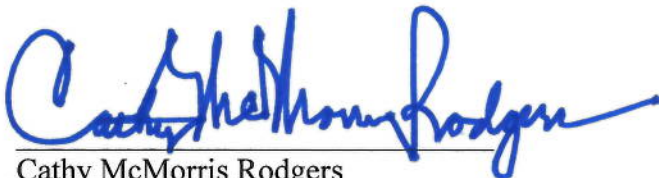
Sincerely,



Greg Walden  
Republican Leader



Brett Guthrie  
Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Oversight  
and Investigations



Cathy McMorris Rodgers  
Republican Leader  
Subcommittee on Consumer Protection  
and Commerce