

December 6, 2024

Dear Members of the United States Senate and U.S. House of Representatives:

We are writing to urge you to support the *Safer Sports for Athletes Act of 2024*. This important legislation will reform the U.S. Center for SafeSport (SafeSport) and ensure that allegations of sexual misconduct and other forms of abuse are taken seriously and that bad actors are held accountable for their actions.

Our organizations are part of U.S. Youth Soccer (USYS), which is comprised of 54 Member State Associations, 10,000 clubs and leagues, and nearly 1 million administrators, coaches, and volunteers nationwide. We are also member organizations of the United States Soccer Federation (U.S. Soccer). Our ability to protect our athletes from abuse depends on SafeSport's efficacy in carrying out its mission of ending sexual, physical, and emotional abuse on behalf of athletes everywhere. Unfortunately, there are troubling limitations within SafeSport's processes that have hindered their ability to carry out their mission.

Congress originally created SafeSport in 2018, and now we need Congress to address serious shortfalls in SafeSport's processes. The *Safer Sports for Athletes Act of 2024* will do this by:

- Improving SafeSport's investigative process by:
 - Providing fair notice and opportunity to be heard to complainants;
 - Protecting complainant privacy and safety and allowing for complainants to have a confidential victim advocate present in any proceedings;
 - Setting a timeline for SafeSport to conclude cases or notify parties of necessary extensions; and
 - Establishing preponderance of evidence as the burden of proof for SafeSport proceedings.

- Ensuring the investigation process is trauma-informed by:
 - Replacing SafeSport's arbitration process with an expert panel, which would consist of five experts with training in trauma-informed care and an understanding of the sport dynamics relevant to the case; and
 - Allowing SafeSport to pursue investigations and sanctions without testimony from victims of sexual misconduct in extraordinary circumstances.

- Allowing national governing bodies (NGBs) to take action against individuals for abuse by:
 - Allowing NGBs to conduct their own inquiries in cases following an administrative closure and where there is claimant consent so that they may make informed decisions about what measures must be taken to ensure abuse does not occur in the future; and
 - Ensuring that NGBs can prevent individuals accused of sexual misconduct from participating in a sport prior to the conclusion of a SafeSport investigation without that action being considered interference in such investigation.

- Changing sports culture and prioritize prevention by:
 - Improving training materials by requiring them to be regularly updated, developed with experts in sexual abuse prevention and athlete survivors, and be trauma-informed using best practices; and
 - Requiring for the first time an investment in prevention by creating a floor of no less than 20% of SafeSport’s funding to be used for prevention efforts and strategies in amateur athletics, including training, oversight practices, and policies to help create a lasting culture change.

As U.S. Soccer members, we have an obligation to every kid who plays soccer to provide them with a safe playing environment. We urge you to be partners in this important mission by passing this important bill.

Thank you for your commitment to keeping the young athletes safe from abuse.

Sincerely,





MARYLAND STATE
YOUTH SOCCER ASSOCIATION



