

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

We, the United States Soccer Federation Athletes, are writing to express our deep concern about the U.S. Center for SafeSport. We are calling on Congress to pass legislation to make necessary changes to SafeSport's process, and to oversee SafeSport's progress in implementing those changes.

Our sport has been through a lot in recent years. A harrowing report by Sally Yates exposed systemic abuse in the National Women's Soccer League and beyond, including a culture of fear around reporting cases of abuse. Some of us were teammates who played alongside the brave women who spoke up, and some of us read painful echoes of our own personal stories in the report. U.S. Soccer and the NWSL have been hard at work to reform our sport, but we need your help to create real change.

As it stands, SafeSport is the only formal mechanism to keep bad actors out of our sport, and we are reliant on it as we work towards reform. But the Yates report laid bare deep flaws in SafeSport's process. SafeSport was created with noble and important intentions, but we believe that as it stands today, SafeSport is failing in what it was meant to achieve.

Our specific issues with SafeSport's process are outlined below, and our representatives are happy to discuss any of these issues with you at your request.

### **Administrative Closure**

Far too often, after investigating a complaint, SafeSport does not make decisions on the merits. Instead, in the majority of cases, investigations are administratively closed, with no ruling in favor of either party.

This outcome has serious consequences for victims. We have seen our colleagues work up the strength and courage to tell their stories, only for investigators to close their case without any conclusive findings. When cases are administratively closed, there is no true closure for victims, and most troublingly, their abusers are free to return to their sport.

We understand that not all cases can be resolved, however we believe that administrative closure happens too often, and that it jeopardizes our colleagues' safety and the safety of young athletes across the country. This is not a criminal court; SafeSport's standards require only a preponderance of evidence to ban or otherwise restrict participation in sport. SafeSport should be expected to properly investigate claims and be held accountable for taking action based on those investigations.

### **Exclusive Jurisdiction**

The practice of administratively closing cases has negative effects that go beyond individual victims. When SafeSport administratively closes a case, it cannot be re-evaluated or re-investigated by U.S. Soccer or any other outside body, leaving victims with no other avenues to achieve justice, and leaving U.S. Soccer without an avenue to pursue its own investigations against suspected abusers or take any steps to remove them from sport.

In the wake of the Yates report's shocking revelations, U.S. Soccer wants to do the right thing and take proactive steps against suspected abusers. Our federation has tools and resources to investigate reports of abuse, but SafeSport is preventing them from participating in any way.

### **Appeals Process**

When SafeSport does find people culpable of abuse, SafeSport's decision is not final and may be appealed by the accused party. The appeal triggers an arbitration process that requires victim participation, including new interviews. Imagine a criminal court where every single appeal requires a new trial, with the victim retestifying, regardless of the merits of the appeal.

The arbitration process can be damaging and retraumatizing for victims of abuse who have already participated in the process and shared their stories in full, only to have to do it all over again. If the victim decides not to go through the process again on appeal, the decision is automatically overturned, and the perpetrator is free to enter back into the sport.

It's necessary to have a fair process, including the possibility of appeal. But an appeal should not automatically result in arbitration. Rather, appeals should first rely on the case's original record, and an arbitration should be granted when there was clear error or another compelling reason.

The appeals process harms victims in other ways, including by affording alleged perpetrators rights that victims do not have. Victims cannot appeal a decision that finds their alleged abuser was not culpable. And SafeSport does not turn over records to the victim so that they can be sure that justice was done.

As athletes, we want to take a lead in collaborating with Congress and National Governing Bodies of Sport in order to create a safe and supportive environment that allows soccer players — and all other athletes in the Olympic movement — to thrive both on and off the field. We are committed to working with you and other stakeholders to make the necessary changes to ensure that players are safe and protected from abuse. And that means that we need to create an efficient, fair, and effective system for athletes to report.

We urge you to work with U.S. Soccer and other stakeholders to create lasting change in our sport. Together, let us work to create a safer future for all athletes.

Signed,

**U.S. Women's National Team**



Alana Cook (WA)



Aubrey Kingsbury (VA)



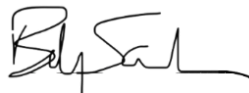
Emily Sonnett (WA)



Lynn Williams (NJ)



Alex Morgan (CA)



Becky Sauerbrunn (OR)



Julie Ertz (AZ)



Mallory Swanson (IL)



Alyssa Naehler (IL)



Casey Murphy (NC)



Kelley O'Hara (NJ)



Megan Rapinoe (WA)



Alyssa Thompson (CA)



Crystal Dunn (OR)



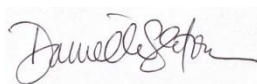
Kristie Mewis (NJ)



Naomi Girma (CA)



Andi Sullivan (VA)



Danielle Slaton (CA)



Lindsey Horan (CO)



Rose Lavelle (WA)



Ashley Sanchez (DC)



Emily Fox (NC)



Lori Lindsey (PA)



Savannah Demelo (KY)

Sofia Huerta (WA)

Sophia Smith (OR)

Tierna Davidson (IL)

Trinity Rodman (DC)

Whitney Engen (NC)

Yael Averbuch West (NJ)

**U.S. Men's National Team**

Brenden Aaronson (NJ)

Matt Miazga (OH)

Tim Ream (MO)

Walker Zimmerman (TN)

Jordan Morris (WA)

Nelson Akwari (SC)

Stuart Holden (CA)

**U.S. Youth & Extended National Teams**

Adam Ballou (CA)

Ashley Triplett (VA)

Chileshe Chitulangoma (MN)

Elizabeth Barbiere Feustel (GA)

Alexis Jones (NV)

Ben Lindau (IL)

Christopher Ahrens (CA)

Emily Cressy (CA)

Ali Hall (CA)

Brianna Pinto (NC)

Danielle Kovacevic (MI)

Emma Martin (GA)

Anessa Campos (CA)

Casey King (OH)

David Dowing (IN)

Erin Cembrale (NY)

Ani Khachadourian (NC)

Cassidy Leake (MA)

Edwin Perry (IL)

Faith Wylie (TX)

Ashley Derrington (CA)

Chad Johnson (CA)

Ellie Jean (MA)

Gabriella Batmani (CA)

Hannah Adler (CA)

Leah Glaser (NJ)

Paris Price (NV)

Steven Bohlemann (AL)

Hollynn Hunter (CA)

Mackenzie Chronopoulos (CA)

Payton Degraw (UT)

Sydney Andrews (KS)

J. Peyton Sefick (NY)

Luke Haubruge (CA)

Pete Winslow (MN)

Taegan Frandsen Ferrin (UT)

Jeane Sunseri-Warp (CA)

McCall Madriago (CA)

Rachel Hunter (VA)

Tate Lancaster (MO)

Jeanpierre Kanashiro (VA)

Madison Reinert (PA)

Rebecca Ostrander (NV)

Tommy Salvi (VA)

John Sullivan (AZ)

Melissa Lowder (CA)

Ricardo Sobreira (FL)

Tori Huber (VA)

Jordan Dickey (IN)

Mia McMurry (NC)

Riley Johnson (MN)

Trip Neil (TX)

Kate Ward (GA)

Mia White (CO)

Sabina Shysh (MD)

Vanessa Valentine (NV)

Kelly Garzon (CA)

Natalie Russo (IN)

Sean Boyle (IL)

Will Frentz (KY)

Kevin McCandlish (VA)

Nicole Koehn (CA)

Smith Hunter (WA)

Lauren Leslie (CA)

Paige Beaudry (MI)

Sophia Post (UT)