



NATIONAL FOOTBALL LEAGUE

ROGER GOODELL
Commissioner

January 15, 2015

The Honorable Brian Schatz
U.S. Senate
722 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senate
724 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senators Schatz and Blumenthal,

Thank you for your letter of December 4th regarding the policies of the National Football League related to domestic violence and sexual assault. I appreciate your interest in this important matter and welcome the opportunity to provide an update on our commitment to implementing a strict policy that addresses, prevents, and punishes unacceptable and illegal off-field conduct among NFL personnel.

The League has made significant strides in education and prevention efforts during the current season. We have provided mandatory educational programming related to domestic violence and sexual assault to more than 5000 people – all NFL personnel, including all players, club executives and team owners, and made the education available to all family members and significant others. The League also has provided all personnel with information about resources, including confidential counseling services and assistance, available through our clubs, the NFL, and independent, community-based organizations. The next phase of this educational program will involve providing specialized training for appropriate personnel to identify those at risk and provide prompt and confidential counseling and other intervention. This combination of education and training is intended to raise awareness among all NFL personnel of this violence, to encourage bystander intervention, and to prevent violations of the Conduct Policy before they occur.

The NFL is also committed to incorporating domestic violence and sexual assault awareness into our public service work and charitable giving. We recognize that these are broad social issues, and we want to use our platform to make a positive difference in responding and solving them. To that end, as mentioned during the hearing, the League pledged to provide \$5 million per year over the next five years in financial, operational, and promotional support to the National Domestic Violence Hotline (the Hotline) and to the National Sexual Violence Resource Center (NSVRC). Moreover, during the past regular season, the NFL donated its institutional media time during game broadcasts to

run PSAs featuring celebrities, as well as current and former NFL players, that were produced in conjunction with the advocacy group NO MORE. These PSAs will continue to run in stadiums, as well as on air, through the playoffs and into the Super Bowl. Over the course of the current season, the value of this investment in media time will amount to approximately \$50 million dollars.

On the discipline side, as you may know, the NFL owners unanimously endorsed a revised and strengthened Personal Conduct Policy during the week following the December 2nd hearing held by the Senate Committee on Commerce, Science, and Transportation. The enhanced Conduct Policy clearly defines the standards that apply to everyone in the NFL and the specific steps that the League will take to promote conduct that is consistent with those expectations and to punish conduct that is inconsistent with those standards.

The key elements of the new Policy include:

- **Prohibited Conduct** – The Policy clearly sets forth the standard of conduct, and identifies those acts that are inconsistent with that standard, including violent behavior such as domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault. It makes clear that a criminal conviction is sufficient, but not necessary, to require discipline. The specific discipline for domestic violence, child abuse, and sexual assault is, for a first offense, a suspension of a minimum of six games (which is more than one-third of the season), with additional penalties where aggravating factors are present and, for a second offense, banishment from the League.
- **Reporting** – All clubs are required to promptly report to the League office any incident that may be a violation of the Personal Conduct Policy. We want to encourage reports from victims and witnesses and make sure that club and League executives understand their obligation to report incidents.
- **Services** – The new Policy is supported by a greater network of services to address the needs of victims and families and to encourage members of the NFL family to report and seek help. The available services include resources provided by the league office and member clubs, as well as by independent community organizations. The support will include the formation of Critical Response Teams, which will work with standard protocols to respond to reported incidents of domestic or family violence, sexual assault, child abuse, or other violent incidents.
- **Investigations** – The new Policy embraces the use of independent investigations. While we will respect and seek not to interfere with the criminal justice system, the League will not wait for the criminal justice process to conclude before acting.

- Leave with Pay – The new Policy includes leave with pay for individuals charged with crimes of violence, whether misdemeanor or felony. This system of paid leave will be uniform and consistent across the League.
- Discipline – The new Conduct Policy establishes a more rigorous and transparent process for initial proceedings. The League has created the new position of and will soon hire a Special Counsel for Investigations and Conduct, who will be an individual with broad experience in the criminal justice system who can oversee the investigation and disciplinary process. This person's obligations will include assessing reports of violations, initiating and supervising investigations, reviewing investigatory reports and other factual findings, serving as a primary liaison to law enforcement officials, communicating with employees and their representatives and, as the Commissioner's designee, conducting hearings for employees subject to discipline and making initial disciplinary decisions under the Commissioner's authority, subject to the employee's right of appeal.

The Special Counsel may also consult independent experts in a range of disciplines as appropriate in individual cases. The Commissioner or his designee will hear appeals and may also consult outside experts. The goal is to have a layered evaluation and discipline process with a number of clear steps, defined procedures, and substantive expertise.

- Conduct Committee – I have appointed a committee of owners that will be responsible for ensuring that the Conduct Policy remains current and reflective of evolving legal and societal standards. The Committee will seek advice from a wide range of outside experts and will be expected to review the Policy at least annually and recommend appropriate changes to it.

The full revised Personal Conduct Policy is attached.

A number of elements of the revised Personal Conduct Policy are intended to increase accountability at the club level. For example, we have clarified and strengthened the obligation of clubs to report promptly any matter that may constitute a violation of the Policy. Clubs are expected to educate their employees on this obligation to report such possible violations. A failure to report an incident as required will be grounds for disciplinary action. We believe that this obligation to report will help to break the "culture of silence" surrounding domestic violence and sexual assault and result in more survivors, as well as potential victims and perpetrators, receiving the support and assistance that they need.

Additionally, all NFL personnel are required to cooperate with a League office investigation. In doing so, our personnel are obligated to be fully responsive and truthful in responding to requests from investigators for information that may bear on whether the Policy was violated. A failure to cooperate with an investigation or to be truthful in responding to inquiries is separate grounds for disciplinary action. Moreover, under the Policy, any person who directly or indirectly interferes in any manner with an investigation, including by retaliating or threatening to retaliate against a victim or witness, will face separate disciplinary action.

Finally, member clubs share in the punishment for player misconduct and will be subject to fines proportional to the players' salaries when players are suspended. Under the Conduct Policy, if a player is formally charged with a crime of violence or an investigation leads me to believe that a player has violated the Policy by committing a violent crime, he will be placed on paid administrative leave. In addition to the loss of the player's services, these financial penalties serve as a deterrent for clubs to acquire players who have a history of misconduct. In fact, clubs may check player status reports detailing the disciplinary history of players prior to signing them to a contract.

This new Conduct Policy was developed after extensive consultation and discussion over a four-month period with a wide range of experts and others inside and outside the NFL, including current and former players, the NFL Players Association, domestic violence, sexual-assault and child-abuse experts and advocates, law enforcement officials, academic experts, and business leaders. The revised policy is ever-evolving, and we will seek continuously to refine and improve it to ensure that the NFL and those that represent it demonstrate and reflect the role and responsibility that we have to our fans, the general public, and the nation.

My best.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Roger Goodell", written in a cursive style.

ROGER GOODELL