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June 23, 2022

Mr. Roger Goodell
Commissioner
National Football League, Inc.
345 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10154

I write with grave concern regarding the National Football League's (NFL) handling of workplace misconduct at the highest levels of the Washington Commanders organization. Reports of a pervasive culture of sexual harassment and misogyny created by owner Dan Snyder and senior staff of the Washington Commanders, and an apparent attempt to cover up this abuse, are extremely disturbing. Regrettably, your evasive testimony yesterday before the House Committee on Oversight and Reform did little to assuage these concerns.

Given continued allegations of past misconduct and a failure of the Commanders or the NFL to adequately address these reports, I write to request the League swiftly and publicly release the results of the investigation it commissioned into mismanagement at the Commanders organization. Your equivocating response to a similar request made yesterday by Chair Carolyn Maloney is not satisfactory given your flippant and unpersuasive reasoning.

I am appalled by the additional information released by House Oversight Reform Committee, which demonstrates that Snyder created a hostile work environment through misconduct and then engaged in a legal campaign to cover up his actions.¹ The committee found that Snyder and his lawyers had compiled information obtained through aggressive legal tactics and private investigators that targeted witnesses and victims. Rather than pursue accountability, the clear intent of this internal shadow investigation was to silence witnesses and survivors and protect the powerful in management. The dossier created by this sham investigation was also used in an attempt to persuade you and the NFL that Snyder was not responsible for the

¹ U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Oversight and Reform, *Supplemental Memo for Hearing on 'Tackling Toxic Workplaces: Examining the NFL's Handling of Workplace Misconduct at the Washington Commanders,'* 117th Cong., 2d sess., 2022, <https://oversight.house.gov/sites/democrats.oversight.house.gov/files/2022-06-22%20Supplemental%20Memo%20Tackling%20Toxic%20Workplaces.pdf>

Commanders' toxic work environment, but was instead the victim of a coordinated smear campaign.²

The House is not the first to investigate these troubling allegations of abuse in the Commanders organization. Following media reports of widespread harassment and verbal abuse, Snyder hired Mary Beth Wilkinson to conduct an investigation of the team's workplace.³ It is evident that this report found at least some evidence to back up these allegations: when Wilkinson concluded her investigation, the NFL fined the team \$10 million as a result of its findings. However, the league refused to release a written report from Wilkinson.⁴

The decision not to release the report in this instance, and the league's continued, secretive handling of the investigation, is confounding and frankly inexcusable. It is also a departure from how the league has handled investigations in the past. For instance, both the "Deflategate" incident and the Ray Rice domestic violence case resulted in detailed reports that were released to the public.⁵ A report on sexual harassment within the Miami Dolphins organization was publicly released after the names and identifying information of victims were redacted. As Commissioner, it is your job to guarantee that everyone associated with the NFL – from owners to players to personnel – are held accountable for wrongdoing. Your failure to release the findings of the Wilkinson investigation to the public is a failure to hold Snyder and the Commanders organization accountable. Instead, it has taken the commendable work of the House Committee on Oversight and Reform to begin to bring the first light of public accountability on the Commanders organization.

In absence of true transparency, allegations of misconduct and abuse will continue to haunt the organization and undermine chances to rebuild the public's trust. On June 21st, *The Washington Post* reported that an employee of the Commanders accused Snyder of asking for sex, groping her, and attempting to remove her clothes in 2009.⁶ Once again, this report includes allegations of a coverup: the team's internal investigation – led by David Donovan, the team's general counsel, who reported directly to Snyder – was clearly conflicted.

Eventually, the team settled with Snyder's accuser on the condition that she not sue or publicly disclose her allegations. According to the *Post*, when Wilkinson's investigation looked into the 2009 allegations, Donovan sued to try to stop her from disclosing any information on the investigation or settlement before eventually dropping the lawsuit.⁷

The league's lack of transparency throughout this process is deeply concerning, especially given the seriousness of the allegations and pattern of new disturbing details continuously emerging. The NFL is bestowed an enormous amount of benefits from fans and

² Ibid

³ Will Hobson, Liz Clarke, "Daniel Snyder pledged support for the NFL's investigation. His actions tell a different story," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.) December 14, 2021.

⁴ Ibid

⁵ Ibid

⁶ Will Hobson, "Document reveals details of 2009 sexual assault allegation against Daniel Snyder," *The Washington Post* (Washington, D.C.) June 21, 2022.

⁷ Ibid

even Congress, who expect it to act in the public's best interest. The NFL has an obligation to the defend that trust in the League – and until you release the findings of the Wilkinson report, the public can't fully assess whether or not the league has properly handled such serious incidents of wrongdoing. Anything less is an unacceptable abdication of your responsibility. I request that the NFL release complete and accurate information to the public related to its investigation of Snyder and the Commanders organization, and provide a brief by July 23, 2022 about its plans to do so.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Richard Blumenthal". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Richard" and last name "Blumenthal" clearly legible.

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senate