

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

October 30th, 2025

The Honorable Cathy Englebert
Commissioner
Women's National Basketball Association
645 Fifth Avenue, 10th Floor, New York, NY, 10022

Dear Commissioner Englebert:

The recent indictments of a head coach, an active player, and individuals tied to organized crime, and last week's reports of the grotesque trend of betting on players' menstrual cycles, are not isolated incidents.^{1,2} They are the predictable and preventable consequence of professional sports leagues entwining their competitions with a rapidly expanding, barely regulated gambling marketplace.

Claims of prioritizing integrity ring hollow when leagues have sold credibility to gambling operators, integrated betting content into broadcasts, normalized wagering for teenagers, glorified it in advertising, and then failed to prevent criminal conduct from taking hold within the sport.

The damage is not confined to the integrity of competition. The leagues' actions have fueled a public health crisis. We now have:

- A documented surge in sports-betting addiction among young men, including minors³
- A spike in bankruptcy, family collapse, and suicide linked to gambling losses⁴
- Constant, high-pressure marketing aimed at vulnerable populations
- A rapidly widening pipeline of new gamblers driven by league-authorized promotion

Leagues have partnered with an industry that profits from addiction and loss, placing that product in the pockets of millions of fans. The stakes go far beyond the integrity of the sport; they encompass the very real human harm occurring across communities nationwide.

The reliance on voluntary self-policing has failed. If the integrity of professional sports depends on federal law enforcement alone, the current system is already broken.

¹ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/nba-commissioner-says-s-deeply-disturbed-gambling-case-rcna239717>

² <https://www.wired.com/story/men-are-betting-on-wnba-players-menstrual-cycles/>

³ <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/39960737/>

⁴ <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/gambling-disorder/what-is-gambling-disorder>

That is why federal regulation is necessary. My SAFE Bet Act would impose minimum federal standards including advertising limits, data and integrity protections, public health safeguards, and transparency measures that no league has been willing to adopt on its own. While reasonable people can debate the specifics of federal standards on the sports betting industry, it is abundantly clear that the exclusively state-based regulatory approach is fundamentally flawed and will continue to jeopardize the integrity of our sports and the public health of our citizens.

The choice before you is now explicit. Either engage directly with Congress to establish mandatory federal guardrails that restore integrity and protect the public or stand in opposition and accept responsibility when the next scandal breaks and more families and lives are destroyed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Paul D. Tonko". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Paul" being more prominent and the last name "Tonko" following in a similar style.

PAUL D. TONKO
Member of Congress