

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

September 17, 2026

Mrs. Cathy Engelbert
Commissioner
Women's National Basketball Association
645 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10022

Dear Commissioner Engelbert,

Thank you for your response to our Congressional letter expressing concerns about the Women's National Basketball Association (WNBA), including the WNBA's repeated failure to protect the players in your league. While your reply outlines a respectable framework for promoting player safety, your actions have told a different story when it comes to ensuring players in your league can compete in a safe, respectful, and professional environment.

The WNBA must be willing to hold players accountable when rules are violated and take meaningful action to keep players safe from repeated and dangerous physical contact. Your league must maintain the respectful environment you describe for both players and fans alike.

The most blatant example of your failure to keep players safe came two weeks after you sent your response to our first letter. On August 8, 2026, the Chicago Sky's DiJonai Carrington clotheslined the Indiana Fever's Sophie Cunningham during a game and then proceeded to post "WHITE PRIVILEGE" after being ejected.¹ Neither your WNBA League Basketball Operations nor WNBA Referee Operations in the post-game review process assessed a suspension or other disciplinary measures outside of a standard fine for a Flagrant 2 foul. Four days later, on August 12, Carrington did the same thing to the Golden State Valkyries' Tiffany Hayes, yet no excessive or flagrant foul was assessed on this second offence. To this day, there have been no repercussions for her continued endangerment of your players.

This failure to act is even more absurd when compared to how a parallel issue was handled by the National Basketball Association (NBA) with Golden State Warriors' player Draymond Green in 2023. Green, within a month's timespan, put one player in a headlock and struck another in the face very similarly to Carrington's action.² Green was suspended indefinitely for a span that lasted 12 games. Assessing a similar penalty to DiJonai Carrington after her actions would certainly make clear player safety is of utmost importance.

¹ Mark Harris, "DiJonai Carrington Hits Two Players Across the Face, Receives Technical Foul After Sophie Cunningham Drama," *OutKick*, August 13, 2026, <https://www.foxnews.com/outkick-sports/dijonai-carrington-hits-two-players-across-face-receives-technical-foul-sophie-cunningham-drama>.

² Ohm Youngmisuk, "How an Indefinite Suspension Revitalized Draymond Green's Career," *ESPN*, January 13, 2025, https://www.espn.com/nba/story/_/id/43361611/how-indefinite-suspension-revitalized-draymond-green-career; TSN Staff, "NBA Suspends Green Five Games for Headlock on Gobert," *TSN*, August 28, 2025, <https://www.tsn.ca/nba/nba-suspends-draymond-green-five-games-for-headlock-on-rudy-gobert-1.2036359>.

The steps you have taken to protect players from harassment off the court have been thoughtful and effective, but you have ignored your duty to maintain a respectful environment at WNBA games for fans.

Fans at any professional sporting event should never be subject to verbal attacks from players, coaches, or anyone associated with a professional sports league. However, on August 23, 2026, Chicago Sky player Natasha Cloud confronted Enes Kanter Freedom as he was sitting in the stands.³ Luckily, Wintrust Arena security stepped in so the situation did not escalate further. Still, no punishment has been assigned to Cloud after her outburst. This inaction is even more concerning when a month prior, at another game on July 28, 2026, fans were confronted by Seattle Storm co-owner Celeste Keaton.⁴ Rightfully so, Keaton was suspended for five games. A uniform punishment should have been dealt for Cloud's actions. The lack of action against Cloud does not seem to indicate the fostering of a safe, respectful, and professional environment you claim to establish.

In addition to fostering a respectful environment for players and fans—as established as a priority for your League—we believe that action must be taken to address hostile behavior so that an environment of hate does not prosper. We do not want to see confrontations between players, fans, and coaches escalate into threats, hateful rhetoric, or violence on or off the court. The WNBA must take action to reprimand aggressive interactions and set an example for professional and civil conduct.

On top of the already concerning lack of will to enforce basic player and fan protections, we are also concerned by the WNBA's lack of eligibility standards, which are at the heart of these verbal confrontations. Article XIII, Section 1(a) of the WNBA's collective bargaining agreement states: "Only players who are women are eligible to play in the WNBA." However, the agreement does not define "women." Individuals including Enes Kanter Freedom and Royce White announced their intent to join the 2027 WNBA draft by identifying as "women," yet have been deemed ineligible by the WNBA.⁵ This action indicates the League certainly understands the biological difference between men and women, and has even gone so far as to enforce that distinction when deciding eligibility.

As a women's sports league, the WNBA must ensure the League remains exclusively for biological women. As Sophie Cunningham has commented, women should not have to face biological men playing in the WNBA. Opening eligibility to biological men would not only create an unfair advantage but would also risk player safety for the women playing in the WNBA.

³ Kareem Copeland, "Enes Kanter Freedom Not WNBA-Eligible; Arena Ban TBD After Ejection from Chicago Sky Game: Sources," *ABC7 Chicago*, August 24, 2026, <https://abc7chicago.com/story/enes-kanter-freedom-not-wnba-eligible-arena-ban-tbd-ejected-chicago-sky-indiana-fever-game-natasha-cloud-altercation-sources/19729139/>.

⁴ Bernadette Giacomazzo, "WNBA News: Seattle Storm Co-Owner Suspended Over Fan Clash," *Yahoo Sports*, August 4, 2026, <https://sports.yahoo.com/articles/wnba-news-seattle-storm-co-183114073.html>.

⁵ Doug Feinberg, "Enes Kanter Freedom and Royce White Are Not Eligible for the WNBA Draft, AP Source Says," *AP News*, August 24, 2026, <https://apnews.com/article/wnba-enes-kanter-freedom-royce-white-4b23db1f7817caa2a5de018fa7c94b86>.

Taken together with our previous concerns regarding the treatment of Clark, these issues raise questions about whether the WNBA is consistently enforcing its rules and standards that adequately protect its female players and its fans.

Accordingly, we request that the WNBA provide answers to the following questions by October 16, 2026.

1. What actions has the WNBA taken since our previous letter to address unnecessary physical hostility and violence between players on the court, particularly when it is habitual?
2. Do you have a uniform policy for addressing players and coaches who instigate verbal confrontations with fans? How do you explain the difference in repercussions assessed between Keaton and Cloud?
3. How does the WNBA define “women” for purposes of Article XIII, Section 1(a) of its collective bargaining agreement?
4. If the WNBA has no definition of “women,” why were Freedom and White deemed ineligible to join the 2027 WNBA draft?

The WNBA has an extraordinary platform and influence. We urge the League to use that platform responsibly by ensuring that rules are enforced equally to protect the safety of women playing the game and fans in the stands. We expect the WNBA to take appropriate action swiftly to remedy these missteps and ensure players and fans can compete in and enjoy a safe, respectful, and professional environment.

We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



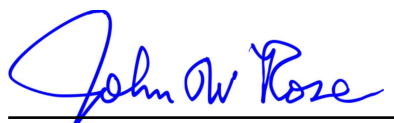
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