

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

July 31, 2014

Roger Goodell
Commissioner
National Football League
345 Park Avenue
New York, New York 10154

Dear Mr. Goodell:

We were dismayed to learn of the National Football League's plainly inadequate remedy imposed on Baltimore Ravens running back Ray Rice for hitting his then-fiancée hard enough to knock her unconscious and then dragging her out of an elevator.

The decision to suspend Mr. Rice for a mere two games sends the inescapable message that the NFL does not take domestic or intimate-partner violence with the seriousness they deserve. As has been widely pointed out, the NFL has imposed longer suspensions for offenses such as non-violent breaches of banned-substances policies and breaking NCAA rules by selling memorabilia. Both on its own and in comparison to these other cases, Mr. Rice's suspension reflects a disturbingly lenient, even cavalier attitude towards violence against women.

We therefore urge you to take two steps immediately. First, reconsider and revise Mr. Rice's suspension to more adequately reflect the seriousness of his offense. We are also writing to the Baltimore Ravens to request that they impose additional discipline under their own authority, but it is imperative that the NFL itself makes clear that this conduct is truly unacceptable.

Second, as it has done regarding drug offenses, the NFL must develop procedures to ensure that allegations and evidence of domestic violence are addressed appropriately. The pressing need for such procedures is clearly shown by a *U-T San Diego* study indicating that 21 of 32 NFL teams last year employed a player with a domestic violence or sexual assault charge on his record, as well as by Bureau of Justice statistics indicating that one in four women will face domestic violence during her lifetime. We note that the NFL's "Policy and Program for Substances of Abuse" provides for a flat penalty of a four-game suspension (and up to a year's suspension for repeated violations) for offenses that include "fail[ure] to cooperate with testing, treatment, evaluation or other requirements [or] a Positive Test." Similarly standardized procedures and levels of discipline should be applied to incidents of domestic violence, which by many measures constitutes a far more serious offense.

Thank you for your prompt attention to these requests.

Sincerely,



RICHARD BLUMENTHAL
United States Senate



TAMMY BALDWIN
United States Senate



CHRIS MURPHY
United States Senate