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# United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6275

March 31, 2025

## **VIA ELECTRONIC TRANSMISSION**

April Holmes, Chair of Executive Committee

U.S. Center for SafeSport

Denver, CO 80246

Dear Ms. Holmes,

I write today to inquire about the Board of Directors' oversight and management of SafeSport's officers and directors. I have several concerns, which fall into one of two categories. The first category is the Board's purported systematic and repeated failure to adequately supervise SafeSport's officers and directors as they carry out SafeSport's important mission. The second category is the apparent or actual mismanagement of funds for salaries, expenses, and contractors.

There appears to be a lack of oversight by the Board to adequately supervise the CEO, Ju'Riese Colón, and other officers and directors in their duties to the organization. It was troubling to read that SafeSport "perpetrated a fraud" against a Florida State Court in Seminole County and intentionally withheld evidence in a criminal case brought at the prompting of one of the Center's investigators.<sup>1</sup> The court found that SafeSport possessed exculpatory information related to a sexual abuse claim and failed to disclose that information to law enforcement.<sup>2</sup> It further stated that SafeSport "filtered" and withheld exculpatory information attempting to influence law enforcement's investigation. This judicial finding is alarming given the mission of SafeSport: to prevent sexual, emotion and physical abuse of athletes across the country.

There are also continued reports of substantial delays in completing investigations opened by SafeSport. This is not a new issue; other senators raised this issue last year<sup>3</sup> and I raised the issue again in my August 2024 correspondence to the CEO, Ju'Riese Colón.<sup>4</sup> Her

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<sup>1</sup> Eddie Pells, *In harsh ruling, judge rips SafeSport Center for 'perpetrating fraud' and withholding evidence*, AP NEWS (Feb. 27, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/safesport-abuse-court-ruling-bbeba6e7a225095ab3ec38d986f42d60>.

<sup>2</sup> *In re United States Center for SafeSport, Inc.*, Nos. 2022-MM-002950-A & 2022-MM-001423-A, at 7 (Fla. Seminole Cnty. Ct. Feb. 25, 2025) (filing #217527824).

<sup>3</sup> Nancy Armour, *Two US senators express concerns with SafeSport, ask sports organizations for feedback*, USA TODAY (Feb. 7, 2024), <https://www.usatoday.com/story/sports/olympics/2024/02/07/us-senators-concerns-safesport-abuse-cases/72509476007/> (Sens. Marsha Blackburn, R-Tennessee, and Gary Peters, D-Michigan).

<sup>4</sup> Letter from Charles E. Grassley to Ju'Riese Colón (Aug. 1, 2024), [https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ceg\\_to\\_safesport\\_-\\_protective\\_measures.pdf](https://www.grassley.senate.gov/imo/media/doc/ceg_to_safesport_-_protective_measures.pdf).

response to my August 2024 letter stated that the increased number of reports of abuse has caused delay as have external factors “such as law enforcement holds, civil proceedings, new information coming to light at a later stage in the investigation, or additional Claimants coming forward can all extend investigations.” The external factors will not change as that is the nature of investigations in general. However, as further discussed below, it is unclear to me whether an increase of \$30 million in funding will solve the problem either as it appears that existing resources can be redirected toward more expedited investigations.

Lastly, there is concern that SafeSport is not prioritizing serious sexual and child abuse cases over other cases, which is causing more serious cases to languish without proper investigation. It is unclear how SafeSport prioritizes cases in which they have exclusive jurisdiction. It is also unclear what minimum investigation is conducted for cases in which it has discretionary jurisdiction before declining or accepting jurisdiction.

The second category of concern relates to how existing funds are being used. Non-profit organizations funded by donations and government grants must spend funds carefully and cannot be compared to a private, for-profit organizations. According to SafeSport’s 2023 tax filing, Ms. Colón’s salary and bonus was a combined \$407,826 (base salary of \$349,351.00 with a \$58,000 bonus).<sup>5</sup> In 2022, the CEO’s base salary was \$322,279 and the bonus was \$95,000.00.<sup>6</sup> Her salary for 2023 was over \$100,000 higher than the next highest paid officer, the Vice President of Marketing and Education. In sum, for 2023, the board compensated eleven officers (including the CEO) between approximately \$111,000 and \$350,000 each and awarded additional bonuses between \$1,200 and \$64,000. These amounts exclude retirement and other nontaxable benefits. According to salary.com, the typical salary range for a chief executive officer in the nonprofit sector is \$141,310 to \$240,777.<sup>7</sup> Ms. Colón made over \$100,000 in salary alone more than the highest end of average nonprofit CEO salaries.

To put this in perspective, in 2023, the President of the United States made \$400,000 in salary per year<sup>8</sup>, and federal workers on the GS scale made a maximum of \$195,200 per year.<sup>9</sup>

Second, the amount of money spent on outside legal services seems high. In 2023, four of the five top paid contractors were for legal services totaling over \$2.4 million. Over \$1.2 million was paid to a Denver-based tort law firm.<sup>10</sup> It is unclear what type of work they handled on behalf of SafeSport.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Ctr. for SafeSport, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax (Form 990) (2023), <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/PUBLIC-DISCLOSURE-2023-US-CENTER-FOR-SAFESPORT.pdf>.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Ctr. for SafeSport, Return of Organization Exempt From Income Tax (Form 990) (2022), <https://uscenterforsafesport.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/US-Center-for-Safesport-2022-990-Public-Disclosure-Copy25.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin Mcquaid, *Nonprofit CEOs and Executive Salary: How Does a Nonprofit CEO Get Paid?*, PAYBEE (Oct. 26, 2023), <https://w.paybee.io/post/how-does-a-nonprofit-ceo-get-paid>.

<sup>8</sup> 3 U.S.C. § 102.

<sup>9</sup> *Understanding Compensation and Benefits*, U.S. GEN. SERVS. ADMIN., <https://tts.gsa.gov/join/compensation-and-benefits/#:~:text=Use%20this%20OPM%20General%20Schedule,than%20this%20under%20any%20circumstance>.

<sup>10</sup> This is the same firm that a Florida court stated it perpetrated a fraud on a Florida State Court in February 2025.

Next, there are expenses that seem excessive for a non-profit organization and financial decisions that seem counter-productive to the organization. For example, in 2023, over \$50,000 was spent on dues and subscriptions, \$36,000 for bank fees and credit cards, and over \$390,000 on travel. Conversely, the organization ended up with over \$8 million in a non-interest-bearing account. Placing that \$8 million in a simple money-market account would have yielded substantial interest that could have been used towards SafeSport's mission to keep athletes safe.

In an effort to get to the bottom of these concerns, please answer the following questions and provide the requested documents by **May 1, 2025**.

1. How does the Board determine salaries for SafeSport's executives? Who made the decision to increase the salary for CEO Ju'Riese Colón in 2022 and 2023? Who is currently in charge of determining salaries for officers to include the CEO?
2. In the 2023 financial documents, there is an entry for a board designated "operating reserve."
  - (a) What is the operating reserve?
  - (b) Why was this sum transferred to this account and for what precise purposes?
3. In the 2023 federal tax return, SafeSport listed 128 employees. How many employees does SafeSport current have? How many employees work remotely? How many employees report to the main office in Denver? How many employees report to another designated office space? How is oversight conducted over the activities of employees who work remotely?
4. How many investigators are employed by SafeSport? Ms. Colón testified on March 20, 2024 before the Subcommittee on Consumer Protection, Product Safety and Data Security that about half of the 130 employees relate to investigations and about 35 are investigators.<sup>11</sup> Is that accurate?
5. Please provide the internal policy manuals to include conflict of interest policy as provided by the 6th Amended Bylaws (revised Jan 1, 2024) Art. VI, ¶ 6.5 and how reports are handled and prioritized.
6. What types of legal matters did the Denver-based law firm handle for SafeSport that amounted to over \$1 million in payments? What was the nature of the legal work they handled?
7. What oversight is provided by the Board over payments of administrative costs and fees such as bank and credit card fees? What review is done to ensure that the organization is not overcharged for items?
8. What is SafeSport's travel policy for its employees with regard to mode of travels, hotels chosen and expenses incurred?

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<sup>11</sup> *Promoting a Safe Environment in U.S. Athletics: Hearing before the Subcomm. on Consumer Prot., Prod. Safety, & Data Sec. of the S. Comm. on Com., Sci. & Transp., 118th Cong. (2024)*, <https://www.commerce.senate.gov/2024/3/promoting-a-safe-environment-in-u-s-athletics>.

Please contact my Judiciary Committee staff at 202-224-5225 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chuck Grassley". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Charles E. Grassley